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SAMUEL JOHNSON

BY

LESLIE STEPHEN

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SAMUEL JOHNSON.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LIFE.

SAMUEL JOHNSON was born in Lichfield in 1709. His father, Michael Johnson, was a bookseller, highly respected by the cathedral clergy, and for a time sufficiently prosperous to be a magistrate of the town, and, in the year of his son's birth, sheriff of the county. He opened a bookstall on market-days at neighbouring towns, including Birmingham, which was as yet unable to maintain a separate bookseller. The tradesman often exaggerates the prejudices of the class whose wants he supplies, and Michael Johnson was probably a more devoted High Churchman and Tory than many of the cathedral clergy themselves. He reconciled himself with difficulty to taking the oaths against the exiled dynasty. He was a man of considerable mental and physical power, but tormented by hypochondriacal tendencies. His son inherited a share both of his constitution and of his principles. Long afterwards Samuel associated with his childish days a faint but solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds and long black hood. The lady was Queen Anne, to whom, in compliance with superstition just dying a natural death, he had been taken by his mother to be touched for the king's evil. The touch was ineffectual. Perhaps, as Boswell suggested, he ought to have been presented to the genuine heirs of the Stuarts in Rome. Disease and superstition had thus stood by his cradle, and they never quitted him during life. The demon of hypochondria was always lying in wait for him, and could be exorcised for a time only by hard work or social excitement. Of this we shall hear enough; but it may be as well to sum up at once some of the physical characteristics which marked him through life and greatly influenced his career.

The disease had scarred and disfigured features otherwise regular and always impressive. It had seriously injured his eyes, entirely destroying, it seems, the sight of one. He could not, it is said, distinguish a friend's face half a yard off, and pictures were to him meaningless patches, in which he could never see the resemblance to their objects. The statement is perhaps exaggerated;

for he could see enough to condemn a portrait of himself. He expressed some annoyance when Reynolds had painted him with a pen held close to his eye; and protested that he would not be handed down to posterity as "blinking Sam." It seems that habits of minute attention atoned in some degree for this natural defect. Boswell tells us how Johnson once corrected him as to the precise shape of a mountain; and Mrs. Thrale says that he was a close and exacting critic of ladies' dress, even to the accidental position of a riband. He could even lay down æsthetical canons upon such matters. He reproved her for wearing a dark dress as unsuitable to a "little creature." "What," he asked, "have not all insects gay colours?" His insensibility to music was even more pronounced than his dulness of sight. On hearing it said, in praise of a musical performance, that it was in any case difficult, his feeling comment was, "I wish it had been impossible!"

The queer convulsions by which he amazed all beholders were probably connected with his disease, though he and Reynolds ascribed them simply to habit. When entering a doorway with his blind companion, Miss Williams, he would suddenly desert her on the step in order to "whirl and twist about" in strange gesticulations. The performance partook of the nature of a superstitious ceremonial. He would stop in a street or the middle of a room to go through it correctly. Once he collected a laughing mob in Twickenham meadows by his antics; his hands imitating the motions of a jockey riding at full speed and his feet twisting in and out to make heels and toes touch alternately. He presently sat down and took out a *Grotius De Veritate*, over which he "see sawed" so violently that the mob ran back to see what was the matter. Once in such a fit he suddenly twisted off the shoe of a lady who sat by him. Sometimes he seemed to be obeying some hidden impulse, which commanded him to touch every post in a street or tread on the centre of every paving-stone, and would return if his task had not been accurately performed.

In spite of such oddities, he was not only possessed of physical power corresponding to his great height and massive stature, but was something of a proficient at athletic exercises. He was conversant with the theory, at least, of boxing: a knowledge probably acquired from an uncle who kept the ring at Smithfield for a year, and was never beaten in boxing or wrestling. His constitutional fearlessness would have made him a formidable antagonist. Hawkins describes the oak staff, six feet in length and increasing from one to three inches in diameter, which lay ready to his hand when he expected an attack from Macpherson of Ossian celebrity. Once he is said to have taken up a chair at the theatre upon which a man had seated himself during his temporary absence, and to have tossed it and its occupant bodily into the pit. He would swim into pools said to be dangerous, beat huge dogs into peace, climb trees, and even run races and jump gates. Once at least he went out foxhunting, and though he despised the amusement, was deeply touched by the complimentary assertion that he rode as well

as the most illiterate fellow in England. Perhaps the most whimsical of his performances was when, in his fifty-fifth year, he went to the top of a high hill with his friend Langton. "I have not had a roll for a long time," said the great lexicographer suddenly, and, after deliberately emptying his pockets, he laid himself parallel to the edge of the hill, and descended, turning over and over till he came to the bottom. We may believe, as Mrs. Thrale remarks upon his jumping over a stool to show that he was not tired by his hunting, that his performances in this kind were so strange and uncouth that a fear for the safety of his bones quenched the spectator's tendency to laugh.

In such a strange case was imprisoned one of the most vigorous intellects of the time. Vast strength hampered by clumsiness and associated with grievous disease, deep and massive powers of feeling limited by narrow though acute perceptions, were characteristic both of soul and body. These peculiarities were manifested from his early infancy. Miss Seward, a typical specimen of the provincial *précieuse*, attempted to trace them in an epitaph which he was said to have written at the age of three.

Here lies good master duck
Whom Samuel Johnson trod on;
If it had lived, it had been good luck,
For then we had had an odd one.

The verses, however, were really made by his father, who passed them off as the child's, and illustrate nothing but the paternal vanity. In fact the boy was regarded as something of an infant prodigy. His great powers of memory, characteristic of a mind singularly retentive of all impressions, were early developed. He seemed to learn by intuition. Indolence, as in his after life, alternated with brief efforts of strenuous exertion. His want of sight prevented him from sharing in the ordinary childish sports; and one of his great pleasures was in reading old romances—a taste which he retained through life. Boys of this temperament are generally despised by their fellows; but Johnson seems to have had the power of enforcing the respect of his companions. Three of the lads used to come for him in the morning and carry him in triumph to school, seated upon the shoulders of one and supported on each side by his companions.

After learning to read at a dame-school, and from a certain Tom Brown, of whom it is only recorded that he published a spelling-book and dedicated it to the Universe, young Samuel was sent to the Lichfield Grammar School, and was afterwards, for a short time, apparently in the character of pupil-teacher, at the school of Stourbridge, in Worcestershire. A good deal of Latin was "whipped into him," and though he complained of the excessive severity of two of his teachers, he was always a believer in the virtues of the rod. A child, he said, who is flogged, "gets his task, and there's an end on't; whereas by exciting emulation and comparisons of superiority

you lay the foundations of lasting mischief; you make brothers and sisters hate each other." In practice, indeed, this stern disciplinarian seems to have been specially indulgent to children. The memory of his own sorrows made him value their happiness, and he rejoiced greatly when he at last persuaded a schoolmaster to remit the old-fashioned holiday-task.

Johnson left school at sixteen and spent two years at home, probably in learning his father's business. This seems to have been the chief period of his studies. Long afterwards he said that he knew almost as much at eighteen as he did at the age of fifty-three —the date of the remark. His father's shop would give him many opportunities, and he devoured what came in his way with the undiscriminating eagerness of a young student. His intellectual resembled his physical appetite. He gorged books. He tore the hearts out of them, but did not study systematically. Do you read books through? he asked indignantly of some one who expected from him such supererogatory labour. His memory enabled him to accumulate great stores of a desultory and unsystematic knowlledge. Somehow he became a fine Latin scholar, though never first rate as a Grecian. The direction of his studies was partly determined by the discovery of a folio of Petrarch, lying on a shelf where he was looking for apples; and one of his earliest literary plans, never carried out, was an edition of Politian, with a history of Latin poetry from the time of Petrarch. When he went to the University at the end of this period, he was in possession of a very unusual amount of reading.

Meanwhile he was beginning to feel the pressure of poverty. His father's affairs were probably getting into disorder. One anecdote—it is one which it is difficult to read without emotion—refers to this period. Many years afterwards, Johnson, worn by disease and the hard struggle of life, was staying at Lichfield, where a few old friends still survive, but in which every street must have revived the memories of the many who had long since gone over to the majority. He was missed one morning at breakfast, and did not return till supper-time. Then he told how his time had been passed. On that day fifty years before, his father, confined by illness, had begged him to take his place to sell books at a stall at Uttoxeter. Pride made him refuse. "To do away with the sin of this disobedience, I this day went in a post-chaise to Uttoxeter, and going into the market at the time of high business, uncovered my head and stood with it bare an hour before the stall which my father had formerly used, exposed to the sneers of the standers-by and the inclemency of the weather; a penance by which I trust I have propitiated Heaven for this only instance, I believe, of contumacy to my father." If the anecdote illustrates the touch of superstition in Johnson's mind, it reveals too that sacred depth of tenderness which ennobled his character. No repentance can ever wipe out the past or make it be as though it had not been; but the remorse of a fine character may be transmuted into a permanent source of nobler views of life and the world.

There are difficulties in determining the circumstances and duration of Johnson's stay at Oxford. He began residence at Pembroke College in 1728. It seems probable that he received some assistance from a gentleman whose son took him as companion, and from the clergy of Lichfield, to whom his father was known, and who were aware of the son's talents. Possibly his college assisted him during part of the time. It is certain that he left without taking a degree, though he probably resided for nearly three years. It is certain, also, that his father's bankruptcy made his stay difficult, and that the period must have been one of trial.

The effect of the Oxford residence upon Johnson's mind was characteristic. The lad already suffered from the attacks of melancholy, which sometimes drove him to the borders of insanity. At Oxford, Law's *Serious Call* gave him the strong religious impressions which remained through life. But he does not seem to have been regarded as a gloomy or a religious youth by his contemporaries. When told in after years that he had been described as a "gay and frolicsome fellow," he replied, "Ah! sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority." Though a hearty supporter of authority in principle, Johnson was distinguished through life by the strongest spirit of personal independence and self-respect. He held, too, the sound doctrine, deplored by his respectable biographer Hawkins, that the scholar's life, like the Christian's, levelled all distinctions of rank. When an officious benefactor put a pair of new shoes at his door, he threw them away with indignation. He seems to have treated his tutors with a contempt which Boswell politely attributed to "great fortitude of mind," but Johnson himself set down as "stark insensibility." The life of a poor student is not, one may fear, even yet exempt from much bitterness, and in those days the position was far more servile than at present. The servitors and sizars had much to bear from richer companions. A proud melancholy lad, conscious of great powers, had to meet with hard rebuffs, and tried to meet them by returning scorn for scorn.

Such distresses, however, did not shake Johnson's rooted Toryism. He fully imbibed, if he did not already share, the strongest prejudices of the place, and his misery never produced a revolt against the system, though it may have fostered insolence to individuals. Three of the most eminent men with whom Johnson came in contact in later life, had also been students at Oxford. Wesley, his senior by six years, was a fellow of Lincoln whilst Johnson was an undergraduate, and was learning at Oxford the necessity of rousing his countrymen from the religious lethargy into which they had sunk. "Have not pride and haughtiness of spirit, impatience, and peevishness, sloth and indolence, gluttony and sensuality, and even a proverbial uselessness been objected to us, perhaps not always by our enemies nor wholly without ground?" So said Wes-

ley, preaching before the University of Oxford in 1744 and the words in his mouth imply more than the preacher's formality. Adam Smith, Johnson's junior by fourteen years, was so impressed by the utter indifference of Oxford authorities to their duties, as to find in it an admirable illustration of the consequences of the neglect of the true principles of supply and demand implied in the endowment of learning. Gibbon, his junior by twenty-eight years, passed at Oxford the "most idle and unprofitable" months of his whole life; and was, he said, as willing to disclaim the university for a mother, as she could be to renounce him for a son. Oxford, as judged by these men, was remarkable as an illustration of the spiritual and intellectual decadence of a body which at other times has been a centre of great movements of thought. Johnson, though his experience was rougher than any of the three, loved Oxford as though she had not been a harsh step-mother to his youth. Sir, he said fondly of his college, "we are a nest of singing-birds." Most of the strains are now pretty well forgotten, and some of them must at all times have been such as we scarcely associate with the nightingale. Johnson, however, cherished his college friendships, delighted in paying visits to his old university, and was deeply touched by the academical honours by which Oxford long afterwards recognised an eminence scarcely fostered by its protection. Far from sharing the doctrines of Adam Smith, he only regretted that the universities were not richer, and expressed a desire which will be understood by advocates of the "endowment of research," that there were many places of a thousand a year at Oxford.

On leaving the University, in 1731, the world was all before him. His father died in the end of the year, and Johnson's whole immediate inheritance was twenty pounds. Where was he to turn for daily bread? Even in those days, most gates were barred with gold and opened but to golden keys. The greatest chance for a poor man was probably through the Church. The career of Warburton, who rose from a similar position to a bishopric might have been rivalled by Johnson, and his connexions with Lichfield might, one would suppose, have helped him to a start. It would be easy to speculate upon causes which might have hindered such a career. In later life, he more than once refused to take orders upon the promise of a living. Johnson, as we know him, was a man of the world; though a religious man of the world. He represents the secular rather than the ecclesiastical type. So far as his mode of teaching goes, he is rather a disciple of Socrates than of St. Paul or Wesley. According to him, a "tavern-chair" was "the throne of human felicity," and supplied a better arena than the pulpit for the utterance of his message to mankind. And, though his external circumstances doubtless determined his method, there was much in his character which made it congenial. Johnson's religious emotions were such as to make habitual reserve almost a sanitary necessity. They were deeply coloured by his constitutional melancholy. Fear of death and hell were prominent in his personal creed. To trade upon his feelings like a charlatan would have

been abhorrent to his masculine character; and to give them full and frequent utterance like a genuine teacher of mankind would have been to imperil his sanity. If he had gone through the excitement of a Methodist conversion, he would probably have ended his days in a madhouse.

Such considerations, however, were not, one may guess, distinctly present to Johnson himself; and the offer of a college fellowship or of private patronage might probably have altered his career. He might have become a learned recluse or a struggling Parson Adams. College fellowships were less open to talent then than now, and patrons were never too propitious to the uncouth giant, who had to force his way by sheer labour, and fight for his own hand. Accordingly, the young scholar tried to coin his brains into money by the most depressing and least hopeful of employments. By becoming an usher in a school, he could a least turn his talents to account with little delay, and that was the most pressing considerations. By one schoolmaster he was rejected on the ground that his infirmities would excite the ridicule of the boys. Under another he passed some months of "complicated misery," and could never think of the school without horror and aversion. Finding this situation intolerable, he settled in Birmingham, in 1733, to be near an old schoolfellow, named Hector, who was apparently beginning to practise as a surgeon. Johnson seems to have had some acquaintances among the comfortable families in the neighbourhood; but his means of living are obscure. Some small literary work came in his way. He contributed essays to a local paper, and translated a book of Travels in Abyssinia. For this, his first publication, he received five guineas. In 1734 he made certain overtures to Cave, a London publisher, of the result of which I shall have to speak presently. For the present it is pretty clear that the great problem of self-support had been very inadequately solved.

Having no money and no prospects, Johnson naturally married. The attractions of the lady were not very manifest to others than her husband. She was the widow of a Birmingham mercer named Porter. Her age at the time (1735) of the second marriage was forty-eight, the bridegroom being not quite twenty-six. The biographer's eye was not fixed upon Johnson till after his wife's death, and we have little in the way of authentic description of her person and character. Garrick, who had known her, said that she was very fat, with cheeks coloured both by paint and cordials, flimsy and fantastic in dress and affected in her manners. She is said to have treated her husband with some contempt, adopting the airs of an antiquated beauty, which he returned by elaborate deference. Garrick used his wonderful powers of mimicry to make fun of the uncouth caresses of the husband, and the courtly Beauclerc used to provoke the smiles of his audience by repeating Johnson's assertion that "it was a love-match on both sides." One incident of the wedding-day was ominous. As the newly-married couple rode back from church, Mrs. Johnson showed her

spirit by reproaching her husband for riding too fast, and then for lagging behind. Resolved "not to be made the slave of caprice," he pushed on briskly till he was fairly out of sight. When she rejoined him, as he, of course, took care that she should soon do, she was in tears. Mrs. Johnson apparently knew how to gain supremacy: but, at any rate, Johnson loved her devotedly during life, and clung to her memory during a widowhood of more than thirty years, as fondly as if they had been the most pattern hero and heroine of romantic fiction.

Whatever Mrs. Johnson's charms, she seems to have been a woman of good sense and some literary judgment. Johnson's grotesque appearance did not prevent her from saying to her daughter on their first introduction, "This is the most sensible man I ever met." Her praises were, we may believe, sweeter to him than those of the severest critics, or the most fervent of personal flatterers. Like all good men, Johnson loved good women, and liked to have on hand a flirtation or two, as warm as might be within the bounds of due decorum. But nothing affected his fidelity to his Letty or displaced her image in his mind. He remembered her in many solemn prayers, and such words as "this was dear Letty's book:" or, "this was a prayer which dear Letty was accustomed to say," were found written by him in many of her books of devotion.

Mrs. Johnson had one other recommendation—a fortune, namely, of £800—little enough, even then, as a provision for the support of the married pair, but enough to help Johnson to make a fresh start. In 1736, there appeared an advertisement in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. "At Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages by Samuel Johnson." If, as seems probable, Mrs Johnson's money supplied the funds for this venture, it was an unlucky speculation.

Johnson was not fitted to be a pedagogue. Success in that profession implies skill in the management of pupils, but perhaps still more decidedly in the management of parents. Johnson had little qualifications in either way. As a teacher he would probably have been alternately despotic and over-indulgent; and, on the other hand, at a single glance the rough Dominie Sampson would be enough to frighten the ordinary parent off his premises. Very few pupils came, and they seem to have profited little, if a story as told of two of his pupils refers to this time. After some months of instruction in English history, he asked them who had destroyed the monasteries? One of them gave no answer; the other replied "Jesus Christ." Johnson, however, could boast of one eminent pupil in David Garrick, though, by Garrick's account, his master was of little service except as affording an excellent mark for his early powers of ridicule. The school, or "academy," failed after a year and a half; and Johnson, once more at a loss for employment, resolved to try the great experiment, made so often and so often unsuccessfully. He left Lichfield to seek his fortune in London. Garrick accompanied him, and the two brought a commor

letter of introduction to the master of an academy from Gilbert Walmsley, registrar of the Prerogative Court in Lichfield. Long afterwards Johnson took an opportunity in the *Lives of the Poets*, of expressing his warm regard for the memory of his early friend, to whom he had been recommended by a community of literary tastes, in spite of party differences and great inequality of age. Walmsley says in his letter, that "one Johnson" is about to accompany Garrick to London, in the order to try his fate with a tragedy and get himself employed in translation. Johnson, he adds, "is a very good scholar and poet, and I have great hopes will turn out a fine tragedy writer."

The letter is dated March 2nd, 1737. Before recording what is known of his early career thus started, it will be well to take a glance at the general condition of the profession of Literature in England at this period.

CHAPTER II.

LITERARY CAREER.

"No man but a blockhead," said Johnson, "ever wrote except for money." The doctrine is, of course, perfectly outrageous, and specially calculated to shock people who like to keep it for their private use, instead of proclaiming it in public. But it is a good expression of that huge contempt for the foppery of high-flown sentiment which, as is not uncommon with Johnson, passes into something which would be cynical if it were not half-humorous. In this case it implies also the contempt of the professional for the amateur. Johnson despised gentlemen who dabbled in his craft, as a man whose life is devoted to music or painting despises the ladies and gentlemen who treat those arts as fashionable accomplishments. An author was, according to him, a man who turned out books as a bricklayer turns out houses or a tailor coats. So long as he supplied a good article and got a fair price, he was a fool to grumble, and a humbug to affect loftier motives.

Johnson was not the first professional author, in this sense, but perhaps the first man who made the profession respectable. The principal habitat of authors, in his age, was Grub Street—a region which, in later years, has ceased to be ashamed of itself, and has adopted the more pretentious name Bohemia. The original Grub Street, it is said, first became associated with authorship during the increase of pamphlet literature, produced by the civil wars. Fox, the martyrologist, was one of its original inhabitants. Another of its heroes was a certain Mr. Welby, of whom the sole record is, that he "lived there forty years without being seen of any." In fact, it was a region of holes and corners, calculated to illustrate that great advantage of London life, which a friend of Boswell's described by saying, that a man could there be always "close to his burrow." The "burrow" which received the luckless wight, was indeed no pleasant refuge. Since poor Green, in the earliest generation of dramatists, bought his "groat's worth of wit with a million of repentance," too many of his brethren had trodden the path which led to hopeless misery or death in a tavern brawl. The history of men who had to support themselves by their pens, is a record of almost universal gloom. The names of Spenser, of Butler, and of Otway, are enough to remind us that even warm contem-

porary recognition was not enough to raise an author above the fear of dying in want of necessaries. The two great dictators of literature, Ben Johnson in the earlier and Dryden in the later part of the century, only kept their heads above water by help of the laureate's pittance, though reckless imprudence, encouraged by the precarious life, was the cause of much of their sufferings. Patronage gave but a fitful resource, and the author could hope at most but an occasionable crust, flung to him from better provided tables.

In the happy days of Queen Anne, it is true, there had been a gleam of prosperity. Many authors, Addison, Congreve, Swift, and others of less name, had won by their pens not only temporary profits but permanent places. The class which came into power at the Revolution was willing for a time, to share some of the public patronage with men distinguished for intellectual eminence. Patronage was liberal when the funds came out of other men's pockets. But, as the system of party government developed, it soon became evident that this involved a waste of power. There were enough political partisans to absorb all the comfortable sinecures to be had; and such money as was still spent upon literature, was given in return for services equally degrading to giver and receiver. Nor did the patronage of literature reach the poor inhabitants of Grub Street. Addison's poetical power might suggest or justify the gift of a place from his elegant friends; but a man like De Foe, who really looked to his pen for great part of his daily subsistence, was below the region of such prizes, and was obliged in later years not only to write inferior books for money, but to sell himself and act as a spy upon his fellows. One great man, it is true, made an independency by literature. Pope received some £8000 for his translation of Homer, by the then popular mode of subscription—a kind of compromise between the systems of patronage and public support. But his success caused little pleasure in Grub Street. No love was lost between the poet and the dwellers in this dismal region. Pope was its deadliest enemy, and carried on an internecine warfare with its inmates, which has enriched our language with a great satire, but which wasted his powers upon low objects, and tempted him into disgraceful artifices. The life of the unfortunate victims, pilloried in the *Dunciad* and accused of the unpardonable sins of poverty and dependence, was too often one which might have extorted sympathy even from a thin-skinned poet and critic.

Illustrations of the manners and customs of that Grub Street of which Johnson was to become an inmate are only too abundant. The best writers of the day could tell of hardships endured in that dismal region. Richardson went on the sound principle of keeping his shop that his shop might keep him. But the other great novelists of the century have painted from life the miseries of an author's existence. Fielding, Smollett, and Goldsmith have described the poor wretches with a vivid force which gives sadness to the reflection that each of those great men was drawing upon his own experience, and that they each died in distress. The *Case of Authors by Profession* to quote the title of a pamphlet by Ralph, was indeed

a wretched one, when the greatest of their number had an incessant struggle to keep the wolf from the door. The life of an author resembled the proverbial existence of the flying-fish, chased by enemies in sea and in air; he only escaped from the slavery of the bookseller's garret, to fly from the bailiff or rot in the debtor's ward or the spunging-house. Many strange half-pathetic and half-ludicrous anecdotes survive to recall the sorrows and the recklessness of the luckless scribblers who, like one of Johnson's acquaintance, "lived in London and hung loose upon society."

There was Samuel Boyse, for example, whose poem on the *Deity* is quoted with high praise by Fielding. Once Johnson had generously exerted himself for his comrade in misery, and collected enough money by sixpences to get the poet's clothes out of pawn. Two days afterwards, Boyse had spent the money and was found in bed, covered only with a blanket, through two holes in which he passed his arms to write. Boyse, it appears, when still in this position would lay out his last half-guinea to buy truffles and mushrooms for his last scrap of beef. Of another scribbler Johnson said, "I honour Derrick for his strength of mind. One night when Floyd (another poor author) was wandering about the streets at night, he found Derrick fast asleep upon a bulk. Upon being suddenly awaked, Derrick started up; 'My dear Floyd, I am sorry to see you in this destitute state; will you go home with me to my *lodgings?*'" Authors in such circumstances might be forced into such a wonderful contract as that which is reported to have been drawn up by one Gardner with Rolt and Christopher Smart. They were to write a monthly miscellany, sold at sixpence, and to have a third of the profits; but they were to write nothing else, and the contract was to last for ninety-nine years. Johnson himself summed up the trade upon earth by the lines in which Virgil describes the entrance to hell; thus translated by Dryden:—

> Just in the gate and in the jaws of hell,
> Revengeful cares and sullen sorrows dwell.
> And pale diseases and repining age,
> Want, fear, and famine's unresisted rage:
> Here toils and Death and Death's half-brother, Sleep—
> Forms, terrible to view, their sentry keep.

"Now," said Johnson, "almost all these apply exactly to an author: these are the concomitants of a printing-house."

Judicious authors, indeed, were learning how to make literature pay. Some of them belonged to the class who understood the great truth that the scissors are a very superior implement to the pen considered as a tool of literary trade. Such, for example, was that respectable Dr. John Campbell, whose parties Johnson ceased to frequent lest Scotchmen should say of any good bits of work, "Ay, ay, he has learnt this of Cawmell." Campbell, he said quaintly, was a good man, a pious man. "I am afraid he has not been in the inside of a church for many years; but he never passes a church without pulling off his hat. This shows he has good prin-

ciples,"—of which in fact there seems to be some less questionable evidence. Campbell supported himself by writings chiefly of the Encyclopedia or Gazetteer kind; and became, still in Johnson's phrase, "the richest author that ever grazed the common of literature." A more singular and less reputable character was that impudent quack, Sir John Hill, who, with his insolent attacks upon the Royal Society, pretentious botanical and medical compilations, plays, novels, and magazine articles, has long sunk into utter oblivion. It is said of him that he pursued every branch of literary quackery with greater contempt of character than any man of his time, and that he made as much as £1500 in a year:—three times as much, it is added, as any one writer ever made in the same period.

The political scribblers—the Arnalls, Gordons, Trenchards, Guthries, Ralphs, and Amhersts, whose names meet us in the notes to the *Dunciad* and in contemporary pamphlets and newspapers—form another variety of the class. Their general character may be estimated from Johnson's classification of the "Scribbler for a Party" with the "Commissoner of Excise," as the "two lowest of all human beings." "Ralph," says one of the notes to the *Dunciad*, "ended in the common sink of all such writers, a political newspaper." The prejudice against such employment has scarcely died out in our own day, and may be still traced in the account of Pendennis and his friend Warrington. People who do dirty work must be paid for it; and the Secret Committee which inquired into Walpole's administration reported that in ten years, from 1731 to 1741, a sum of £50,077 18*s.* had been paid to writers and printers of newspapers. Arnall, now remembered chiefly by Pope's line,—

> Spirit of Arnall, aid me whilst I lie!

had received, in four years, £10,997 6*s.* 8*d.* of this amount. The more successful writers might look to pensions or preferment. Francis, for example, the translator of Horace, and the father, in all probability, of the most formidable of the whole tribe of such literary gladiators, received, it is said, £900 a year for his work, besides being appointed to a rectory and the chaplaincy of Chelsea.

It must, moreover, be observed that the price of literary work wrs rising during the century, and that, in the latter half, considerable sums were received by successful writers. Religious as well as dramatic literature had begun to be commercially valuable. Baxter, in the previous century, made from £60 to £80 a year by his pen. The copyright of Tillotson's *Sermons* was sold, it is said, upon his death for £2500. Considerable sums were made by the plan of publishing by subscription. It is said that 4600 people subscribed to the two posthumous volumes of Conybeare's *Sermons*. A few poets trod in Pope's steps. Young made more than £3000 for the Satires called the *Universal Passion*, published, I think, on the same plan; and the Duke of Wharton is said, though

the report is doubtful, to have given him £2000 for the same work Gay made £1000 by his *Poems;* £400 for the copyright of the *Beggar's Opera*, and three times as much for its second part, *Polly*. Among historians, Hume seems to have received £700 a volume; Smollett made £2000 by his catchpenny rival publication; Henry made £3300 by his history; and Robertson, after the booksellers had made £6000 by his *Henry of Scotland*, sold his *Charles V.* for £4500. Amongst the novelists, Fielding received £700 for *Tom Jones* and £1000 for *Amelia;* Sterne, for the second edition of the first part of *Tristam Shandy* and for two additional volumes, received £650; besides which Lord Fauconberg gave him a living (most inappropriate acknowledgment one would say!), and Warburton a purse of gold. Goldsmith received 60 guineas for the immortal *Vicar*, a fair price, according to Johnson, for a work by a then unknown author. By each of his plays he made about £500, and for the eight volumes of his *Natural History* he received 800 guineas. Towards the end of the century, Mrs. Radcliffe got £500 for the *Mysteries of Udolpho*, and £800 for her last work, the *Italian*. Perhaps the largest sum given for a single book was £6000 paid to Hawkesworth for his account of the South Sea Expeditions. Horne Tooke received from £4000 to £5000 for the *Diversions of Purley;* and it is added by his biographer, though it seems to be incredible, that Hayley received no less than £11,000 for the *Life of Cowper*. This was, of course, in the present century, when we are already approaching the period of Scott and Byron.

Such sums prove that some few authors might achieve independence by a successful work; and it is well to remember them in considering Johnson's life from the business point of view. Though he never grumbled at the booksellers, and on the contrary, was always ready to defend them as liberal men, he certainly failed, whether from carelessness or want of skill, to turn them to as much profit as many less celebrated rivals. Meanwhile, pecuniary success of this kind was beyond any reasonable hopes. A man who has to work like his own dependent Levett, and to make the "modest toil of every day" supply "the wants of every day," must discount his talents until he can secure leisure for some more sustained effort. Johnson, coming up from the country to seek for work, could have but a slender prospect of rising above the ordinary level of his Grub Street companions and rivals. One publisher to to whom he applied suggested to him that it would be his wisest course to buy a porter's knot and carry trunks; and, in the struggle which followed, Johnson must sometimes have been tempted to regret that the advice was not taken.

The details of the ordeal through which he was now to pass have naturally vanished. Johnson, long afterwards, burst into tears on recalling the trials of this period. But, at the time, no one was interested in noting the history of an obscure literary drudge, and it has not been described by the sufferer himself. What we know is derived from a few letters and incidental references of Johnson

in later days. On first arriving in London he was almost destitute, and had to join with Garrick in raising a loan of five pounds, which we are glad to say, was repaid. He dined for eightpence, at an ordinary: a cut of meat for sixpence, bread for a penny, and a penny to the waiter, making out the charge One of his acquaintance had told him that a man might live in London for thirty pounds a year. Ten pounds would pay for clothes; a garret might be hired for eighteen-pence a week; if any one asked for an address, it was easy to reply, "I am to be found at such a place." Threepence laid out at a coffee-house would enable him to pass some hours a day in good company; dinner might be had for sixpence, a bread-and-milk breakfast for a penny, and supper was superfluous. On clean shirt day you might go abroad and pay visits. This leaves a surplus of nearly one ponnd from the thirty.

Johnson, however, had a wife to support; and to raise funds for even so ascetic a mode of existence required steady labour. Often, it seems, his purse was at the very lowest ebb. One of his letters to his employer is signed *impransus;* and whether or not the dinnerless condition was in this case accidental, or significant of absolute impecuniosity, the less pleasant interpretation is not improbable. He would walk the streets all night with his friend Savage, when their combined funds could not pay for a lodging. One night, as he told Sir Joshua Reynolds in later years, they thus perambulated St. James's Square, warming themselves by declaiming against Walpole, and nobly resolved that they would stand by their country.

Patriotic enthusiasm, however, as no one knew better than Johnson, is a poor substitute for bed and supper. Johnson suffered acutely and made some attempts to escape from his misery. To the end of his life, he was grateful to those who had lent him a helping hand. "Harry Hervey," he said of one of them shortly before his death, "was a vicious man, but very kind to me. If you call a dog Hervey, I shall love him." Pope was impressed by the excellence of his first poem, *London*, and induced Lord Gower to write to a friend to beg Swift to obtain a degree for Johnson from the University of Dublin. The terms of this circuitous application, curious, as bringing into connexion three of the most eminent men of letters of the day, prove that the youngest of them was at the time (1739) in deep distress. The object of the degree was to qualify Johnson for a mastership of £60 a year, which would make him happy for life. He would rather, said Lord Gower, die upon the road to Dublin if an examination were necessary, "than be starved to death in translating for booksellers, which has been his only subsistence for some time past." The application failed, however, and the want of a degree was equally fatal to another application to be admitted to practise at Doctor's Commons.

Literature was thus perforce Johnson's sole support; and by literature was meant, for the most part, drudgery of the kind indicated by the phrase, "translating for booksellers." While

still in Lichfield, Johnson had, as I have said, written to Cave, proposing to become a contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine.* The letter was one of those which a modern editor receives by the dozen, and answers as perfunctorily as his conscience will allow. It seems, however, to have made some impression upon Cave, and possibly led to Johnson's employment by him on his first arrival in London. From 1738 he was employed both on the Magazine and in some jobs of translation.

Edward Cave, to whom we are thus introduced, was a man of some mark in the history of literature. Johnson always spoke of him with affection and afterwards wrote his life in complimentary terms. Cave, though a clumsy, phlegmatic person of little cultivation, seems to have been one of those men who, whilst destitute of real critical powers, have a certain instinct for recognising the commercial value of literary wares. He had become by this time well-known as the publisher of a magazine which survives to this day. Journals containing summaries of passing events had already been started. Boyer's *Political State of Great Britain* began in 1711. *The Historical Register*, which added to a chronicle some literary notices, was started in 1716. *The Grub Street Journal* was another journal with fuller critical notices, which first appeared in 1730; and these two seem to have been superseded by the *Gentleman's Magazine*, started by Cave in the next year. Johnson saw in it an opening for the employment of his literary talents; and regarded its contributions with that awe so natural in youthful aspirants, and at once so comic and pathetic to writers of a little experience. The names of many of Cave's staff are preserved in a note to Hawkins. One or two of them, such as Birch and Akenside, have still a certain interest for students of literature; but few have heard of the great Moses Brown, who was regarded as the great poetical light of the magazine. Johnson looked up to him as a leader in his craft, and was graciously taken by Cave to an alehouse in Clerkenwell, where, wrapped in a horseman's coat, and "a great bushy uncombed wig," he saw Mr. Brown sitting at the end of a long table, in a cloud of tobacco-smoke, and felt the satisfaction of a true hero-worshipper.

It is needless to describe in detail the literary task-work done by Johnson at this period, the Latin poems which he contributed in praise of Cave, and of Cave's friends, or the Jacobite squibs by which he relieved his anti-ministerialist feelings. One incident of the period doubtless refreshed the soul of many authors, who have shared Campbell's gratitude to Napoleon for the sole redeeming action of his life—the shooting of a bookseller. Johnson was employed by Osborne, a rough specimen of the trade, to make a catalogue of the Harleian Library. Osborne offensively reproved him for negligence, and Johnson knocked him down with a folio. The book with which the feat was performed (*Biblia Græca Septuaginta, fol.* 1594, Frankfort) was in existence in a bookseller's shop at Cambridge in 1812, and should surely have been placed in some safe author's museum.

The most remarkable of Johnson's performances as a hack-writer deserves a brief notice. He was one of the first of reporters. Cave published such reports of the debates in Parliament as were then allowed by the jealousy of the Legislature, under the title of *The Senate of Lilliput*. Johnson was the author of the debates from Nov. 1740 to February 1742. Persons were employed to attend in the two Houses, who brought home notes of the speeches, which were then put into shape by Johnson. Long afterwards, at a dinner at Foote's, Francis (the father of Junius) mentioned a speech of Pitt's as the best he had ever read, and superior to anything in Demosthenes. Hereupon Johnson replied, "I wrote that speech in a garret in Exeter Street." When the company applauded not only his eloquence but his impartiality, Johnson replied, "That is not quite true; I saved appearances tolerably well, but I took care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it." The speeches passed for a time as accurate; though, in truth, it has been proved and it is easy to observe, that they are, in fact, very vague reflections of the original. The editors of Chesterfield's Works published two of the speeches, and, to Johnson's considerable amusement, declared that one of them resembled Demosthenes and the other Cicero. It is plain enough to the modern reader that, if so, both of the ancient orators must have written true Johnsonese; and, in fact, the style of the true author is often as plainly marked in many of these compositions as in the *Rambler* or *Rasselas*. For this deception, such as it was, Johnson expressed penitence at the end of his life, though he said that he had ceased to write when he found that they were taken as genuine. He would not be "accessory to the propagation of falsehood."

Another of Johnson's works which appeared in 1744 requires notice both for its intrinsic merit, and its autobiographical interest. The most remarkable of his Grub-Street companions was the Richard Savage already mentioned. Johnson's life of him written soon after his death is one of his most forcible performances, and the best extant illustration of the life of the struggling authors of the time. Savage claimed to be the illegitimate son of the Countess of Macclesfield, who was divorced from her husband in the year of his birth on account of her connexion with his supposed father, Lord Rivers. According to the story, believed by Johnson, and published without her contradiction in the mother's lifetime, she not only disavowed her son, but cherished an unnatural hatred for him. She told his father that he was dead, in order that he might not be benefited by the father's will; she tried to have him kidnapped and sent to the plantations; and she did her best to prevent him from receiving a pardon when he had been sentenced to death for killing a man in a tavern brawl. However this may be, and there are reasons for doubt, the story was generally believed, and caused much sympathy for the supposed victim. Savage was at one time protected by the kindness of Steele, who published his story, and sometimes employed him as a literary assistant. When Steele became disgusted with him, he

received generous help from the actor Wilks and from Mrs. Oldfield, to whom he had been introduced by some dramatic efforts. Then he was taken up by Lord Tyrconnel, but abandoned by him after a violent quarrel; he afterwards called himself a volunteer laureate, and received a pension of 50*l.* a year from Queen Caroline; on her death he was thrown into deep distress, and helped by a subscription to which Pope was the chief contributor, on condition of retiring to the country. Ultimately he quarrelled with his last protectors, and ended by dying in a debtor's prison. Various poetical works, now utterly forgotten, obtained for him scanty profit. This career sufficiently reveals the character. Savage belonged to the very common type of men, who seem to employ their whole talents to throw away their chances in life, and to disgust every one who offers them a helping hand. He was, however, a man of some talent, though his poems are now hopelessly unreadable, and seems to have had a singular attraction for Johnson. The biography is curiously marked by Johnson's constant effort to put the best face upon faults, which he has too much love of truth to conceal. The explanation is, partly, that Johnson conceived himself to be avenging a victim of cruel oppression. "This mother," he says, after recording her vindictiveness, "is still alive, and may perhaps even yet, though her malice was often defeated, enjoy the pleasure of reflecting that the life, which she often endeavoured to destroy, was at last shortened by her maternal offices; that though she could not transport her son to the plantations, bury him in the shop of a mechanic, or hasten the hand of the public executioner, she has yet had the satisfaction of embittering all his hours, and forcing him into exigencies that hurried on his death."

But it is also probable that Savage had a strong influence upon Johnson's mind at a very impressible part of his career. The young man, still ignorant of life and full of reverent enthusiasm for the literary magnates of his time, was impressed by the varied experience of his companion, and, it may be, flattered by his intimacy. Savage, he says admiringly, had enjoyed great opportunities of seeing the most conspicuous men of the day in their private life. He was shrewd and inquisitive enough to use his opportunities well. "More circumstances to constitute a critic on human life could not easily concur." The only phrase which survives to justify this remark is Savage's statement about Walpole, that "the whole range of his mind was from obscenity to politics, and from politics to obscenity." We may, however, guess what was the special charm of the intercourse to Johnson. Savagewas an expert in that science of human nature, learnt from experience not from books, upon which Johnson set so high a value, and of which he was destined to become the authorised expositor. There were, moreover resemblances between the two men. They were both admired and sought out for their conversational powers. Savage, indeed, seems to have lived chiefly by the people who entertained him for talk, till he had disgusted them by his insolence and his utter disre-

gard of time and propriety. He would, like Johnson, sit up talking beyond midnight, and next day decline to rise till dinner-time, though his favourite drink was not, like Johnson's, free from intoxicating properties. Both of them had a lofty pride, which Johnson heartily commends in Savage, though he has difficulty in palliating some of its manifestations. One of the stories reminds us of an anecdote already related of Johnson himself. Some clothes had been left for Savage at a coffee-house by a person who, out of delicacy, concealed his name. Savage, however, resented some want of ceremony, and refused to enter the house again till the clothes had been removed.

What was honourable pride in Johnson was, indeed, simple arrogance in Savage. He asked favours, his biographer says, without submission, and resented refusal as an insult. He had too much pride to acknowledge, not too much to receive, obligations; enough to quarrel with his charitable benefactors, but not enough to make him rise to independence of their charity. His pension would have sufficed to keep him, only that as soon as he received it he retired from the sight of all his acquaintance, and came back before long as penniless as before. This conduct, observes his biographer, was "very particular." It was hardly so singular as objectionable; and we are not surprised to be told that he was rather a "friend of goodness" than himself a good man. In short, we may say of him as Beauclerk said of a friend of Boswell's that, if he had excellent principles, he did not wear them out in practice.

There is something quaint about this picture of a thorough-paced scamp, admiringly painted by a virtuous man; forced in spite of himself, to make it a likeness, and striving in vain to make it attractive. But it is also pathetic when we remember that Johnson shared some part at least of his hero's miseries. "On a bulk, in a cellar, or in a glass-house, among thieves and beggars, was to be found the author of *The Wanderer*, the man of exalted sentiments, extensive views, and curious observations: the man whose remarks on life might have assisted the statesman, whose ideas of virtue might have enlightened the moralist, whose eloquence might have influenced senators, and whose delicacy might have polished courts." Very shocking, no doubt, and yet hardly surprising under the circumstances! To us it is more interesting to remember that the author of the *Rambler* was not only a sympathiser, but a fellow-sufferer with the author of the *Wanderer*, and shared the queer "lodgings" of his friend, as Floyd shared the lodgings of Derrick. Johnson happily came unscathed through the ordeal which was too much for poor Savage, and could boast with perfect truth in later life that "no man, who ever lived by literature, had lived more independently than I have done." It was in so strange a school, and under such questionable teaching that Johnson formed his character of the world and of the conduct befitting its inmates. One characteristic conclusion is indicated in the opening passage of the life. It has always been observed, he says, that men eminent by nature or fortune are not generally happy: "whether

it be that apparent superiority incites great designs, and great designs are naturally liable to fatal miscarriages; or that the general lot of mankind is misery, and the misfortunes of those, whose eminence drew upon them an universal attention, have been more carefully recorded because they were more generally observed, and have in reality been only more conspicuous than those of others, not more frequent or more severe."

The last explanation was that which really commended itself to Johnson. Nobody had better reason to know that obscurity might conceal a misery as bitter as any that fell to the lot of the most eminent. The gloom due to his constitutional temperament was intensified by the sense that he and his wife were dependent upon the good will of a narrow and ignorant tradesman for the scantiest maintenance. How was he to reach some solid standing-ground above the hopeless mire of Grub Street? As a journeyman author he could make both ends meet, but only on condition of incessant labour. Illness and misfortune would mean constant dependence upon charity or bondage to creditors. To get ahead of the world it was necessary to distinguish himself in some way from the herd of needy competitors. He had come up from Lichfield with a play in his pocket, but the play did not seem at present to have much chance of emerging. Meanwhile he published a poem which did something to give him a general reputation.

London—an imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal—was published in May, 1738. The plan was doubtless suggested by Pope's imitations of Horace, which had recently appeared. Though necessarily following the lines of Juvenal's poem, and conforming to the conventional fashion of the time. both in sentiment and versification, the poem has a biographical significance. It is indeed odd to find Johnson, who afterwards thought of London as a lover of his mistress, and who despised nothing more heartily than the cant of Rousseau and the sentimentalists, adopting in this poem the ordinary denunciations of the corruption of towns, and singing the praises of an innocent country life. Doubtless, the young writer was like other young men, taking up a strain still imitative and artificial. He has a quiet smile at Savage in the life, because in his retreat to Wales, that enthusiast declared that he "could not debar himself from the happiness which was to be found in the calm of a cottage, or lose the opportunity of listening without intermission to the melody of the nightingale, which he believed was to be heard from every bramble, and which he did not fail to mention as a very important part of the happiness of a country life." In *London*, this insincere cockney adopts Savage's view. Thales, who is generally supposed to represent Savage (and this coincidence seems to confirm the opinion), is to retire "from the dungeons of the Strand," and to end a healthy life in pruning walks and twining bowers in his garden.

> There every bush with nature's music rings,
> There every breeze bears health upon its wings.

Johnson had not yet learnt the value of perfect sincerity even in

poetry. But it must also be admitted that London, as seen by the poor drudge from a Grub Street garret, probably presented a prospect gloomy enough to make even Johnson long at times for rural solitude. The poem reflects, too, the ordinary talk of the heterogeneous band of patriots, Jacobites, and disappointed Whigs, who were beginning to gather enough strength to threaten Walpole's long tenure of power. Many references to contemporary politics illustrate Johnson's sympathy with the inhabitants of the contemporary Cave of Adullam.

This poem, as already stated, attracted Pope's notice, who made a curious note on a scrap of paper sent with it to a friend. Johnson is described as "a man afflicted with an infirmity of the convulsive kind, that attacks him sometimes so as to make him a sad spectacle." This seems to have been the chief information obtained by Pope about the anonymous author, of whom he had said, on first reading the poem, this man will soon be *déterré*. *London* made a certain noise; it reached a second edition in a week, and attracted various patrons, among others, General Oglethorpe, celebrated by Pope, and through a long life the warm friend of Johnson. One line, however, in the poem printed in capital letters, gives the moral which was doubtless most deeply felt by the author, and which did not lose its meaning in the years to come. This mournful truth, he says,—

> Is everywhere confess'd,
> Slow rises worth by poverty depress'd.

Ten years later (in January, 1749) appeared the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, an imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal. The difference in tone shows how deeply this and similar truths had been impressed upon its author in the interval. Though still an imitation, it is as significant as the most original work could be of Johnson's settled views of life. It was written at a white heat, as indeed Johnson wrote all his best work. Its strong Stoical morality, its profound and melancholy illustrations of the old and ever new sentiment, *Vanitas Vanitatum*, make it perhaps the most impressive poem of the kind in the language. The lines on the scholar's fate show that the iron had entered his soul in the interval. Should the scholar succeed beyond expectation in his labours and escape melancholy and disease, yet, he says,—

> Yet hope not life from grief and danger free,
> Nor think the doom of man reversed on thee;
> Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes
> And pause awhile from letters, to be wise;
> There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
> Toil, envy, want, the patron and the jail;
> See nations, slowly wise and meanly just,
> To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
> If dreams yet flatter, once again attend.
> Hear Lydiat's life and Galileo's end.

For the "patron," Johnson had originally written the "garret." The change was made after an experience of patronage to be presently described in connexion with the *Dictionary*.

For *London* Johnson received ten guineas, and for the *Vanity of Human Wishes* fifteen. Though indirectly valuable, as increasing his reputation, such work was not very profitable. The most promising career in a pecuniary sense was still to be found on the stage. Novelists were not yet the rivals of dramatists, and many authors had made enough by a successful play to float them through a year or two. Johnson had probably been determined by his knowledge of this fact to write the tragedy of *Irene*. No other excuse at least can be given for the composition of one of the heaviest and most unreadable of dramatic performances, interesting now, if interesting at all, solely as a curious example of the result of bestowing great powers upon a totally uncongenial task. Young men, however, may be pardoned for such blunders if they are not repeated, and Johnson, though he seems to have retained a fondness for his unlucky performance, never indulged in playwriting after leaving Lichfield. The best thing connected with the play was Johnson's retort to his friend Walmsley, the Lichfield registrar. "How," asked Walmsley, "can you contrive to plunge your heroine into deeper calamity?" "Sir," said Johnson, "I can put her into the spiritual court." Even Boswell can only say for *Irene* that it is "entitled to the praise of superior excellence," and admits its entire absence of dramatic power. Garrick, who had become manager of Drury Lane, produced his friend's work in 1749. The play was carried through nine nights by Garrick's friendly zeal, so that the author had his three nights' profits. For this he received £195 17*s*. and for the copy he had £100. People probably attended, as they attend modern representations of legitimate drama, rather from a sense of duty, than in the hope of pleasure. The heroine originally had to speak two lines with a bowstring round her neck. The situation produced cries of murder, and she had to go off the stage alive. The objectionable passage was removed, but *Irene* was on the whole a failure, and has never, I imagine, made another appearance. When asked how he felt upon his ill-success, he replied "like the monument," and indeed he made it a principle throughout life to accept the decision of the public like a sensible man without murmurs.

Meanwhile, Johnson was already embarked upon an undertaking of a very different kind. In 1747 he had put forth a plan for an English Dictionary, addressed at the suggestion of Dodsley, to Lord Chesterfield, then Secretary of State, and the great contemporary Mæcenas. Johnson had apparently been maturing the scheme for some time. "I know," he says in the "plan," that "the work in which I engaged is generally considered as drudgery for the blind, as the proper toil of artless industry, a book that requires neither the light of learning nor the activity of genius, but may be successfully performed without any higher quality than that of bearing burdens with dull patience, and beating the track of the

alphabet with sluggish resolution." He adds in a sub-sarcastic tone, that although princes and statesmen had once thought it honourable to patronise dictionaries, he had considered such benevolent acts to be "prodigies, recorded rather to raise wonder than expectation," and he was accordingly pleased and surprised to find that Chesterfield took an interest in his undertaking. He proceeds to lay down the general principles upon which he intends to frame his work, in order to invite timely suggestions and repress unreasonable expectations. At this time, humble as his aspirations might be, he took a view of the possibilities open to him which had to be lowered before the publication of the dictionary. He shared the illusion that a language might be "fixed" by making a catalogue of its words. In the preface which appeared with the completed work, he explains very sensibly the vanity of any such expectation. Whilst all human affairs are changing, it is, as he says, absurd to imagine that the language which repeats all human thoughts and feelings can remain unaltered.

A dictionary, as Johnson conceived it, was in fact work for a "harmless drudge," the definition of a lexicographer given in the book itself. Etymology in a scientific sense was as yet non-existent, and Johnson was not in this respect ahead of his contemporaries. To collect all the words in the language, to define their meanings as accurately as might be, to give the obvious or whimsical guesses at Etymology suggested by previous writers, and to append a good collection of illustrative passages was the sum of his ambition. Any systematic training of the historical processes by which a particular language had been developed was unknown, and of course the result could not be anticipated. The work, indeed, required a keen logical faculty of definition, and wide reading of the English literature of the two preceding centuries; but it could of course give no play either for the higher literary faculties on points of scientific investigation. A dictionary in Johnson's sense was the highest kind of work to which a literary journeyman could be set, but it was still work for a journeyman, not for an artist. He was not adding to literature, but providing a useful implement for future men of letters.

Johnson had thus got on hand the biggest job that could be well undertaken by a good workman in his humble craft. He was to receive fifteen hundred and seventy-five pounds for the whole, and he expected to finish it in three years. The money, it is to be observed, was to satisfy not only Johnson but several copyists employed in the mechanical part of the work. It was advanced by instalments, and came to an end before the conclusion of the book. Indeed, it appeared when accounts were settled, that he had received a hundred pounds more than was due. He could, however, pay his way for the time, and would gain a reputation enough to ensure work in future. The period of extreme poverty had probably ended when Johnson got permanent employment on the *Gentleman's Magazine*. He was not elevated above the need of drudgery and economy, but he might at least be free from the

dread of neglect. He could command his market—such as it was. The necessity of steady labour was probably unfelt in repelling his fits of melancholy. His name was beginning to be known, and men of reputation were seeking his acquaintance. In the winter of 1749 he formed a club, which met weekly at a "famous beef-steak house" in Ivy Lane. Among its members were Hawkins, afterwards his biographer, and two friends, Bathurst a physician, and Hawkesworth an author, for the first of whom he entertained an unusually strong affection. The Club, like its more famous successor, gave Johnson an opportunity of displaying and improving his great conversational powers. He was already dreaded for his prowess in argument, his dictatorial manners and vivid flashes of wit and humour, the more effective from the habitual gloom and apparent heaviness of the discourser.

The talk of this society probably suggested topics for the *Rambler*, which appeared at this time, and caused Johnson's fame to spread further beyond the literary circles of London. The wit and humour have, indeed, left few traces upon its ponderous pages, for the *Rambler* marks the culminating period of Johnson's worst qualities of style. The pompous and involved language seems indeed to be a fit clothing for the melancholy reflections which are its chief staple, and in spite of its unmistakable power it is as heavy reading as the heavy class of lay-sermonizing to which it belongs. Such literature, however, is often strangely popular in England, and the *Rambler*, though its circulation was limited, gave to Johnson his position as a great practical moralist. He took his literary title, one may say, from the *Rambler*, as the more familiar title was derived from the *Dictionary*.

The *Rambler* was published twice a week from March 20th, 1750, to March 14th, 1752. In five numbers alone he received assistance from friends, and one of these, written by Richardson, is said to have been the only number which had a large sale. The circulation rarely exceeded 500, though ten English editions were published in the author's lifetime, besides Scotch and Irish editions. The payment, however, namely, two guineas a number, must have been welcome to Johnson, and the friendship of many distinguished men of the time was a still more valuable reward. A quaint story illustrates the hero-worship of which Johnson now became the object. Dr. Burney, afterwards an intimate friend, had introduced himself to Johnson by letter in consequence of the *Rambler*, and the plan of the *Dictionary*. The admiration was shared by a friend of Burney's, a Mr. Bewley, known—in Norfolk at least—as the "philosopher of Massingham." When Burney at last gained the honour of a personal interview, he wished to procure some "relic" of Johnson for his friend. He cut off some bristles from a hearth-broom in the doctor's chambers, and sent them in a letter to his fellow-enthusiast. Long afterwards Johnson was pleased to hear of this simple-minded homage, and not only sent a copy of the *Lives of the Poets* to the rural philosopher, but deigned to grant him a personal interview.

Dearer than any such praise was the approval of Johnson's wife. She told him that, well as she had thought of him before, she had not considered him equal to such a performance. The voice that so charmed him was soon to be silenced forever. Mrs. Johnson died (March 17th, 1752) three days after the appearance of the last *Rambler*. The man who has passed through such a trial knows well that, whatever may be in store for him in the dark future, fate can have no heavier blow in reserve. Though Johnson once acknowledged to Boswell, when in a placid humour, that happier days had come to him in his old age than in his early life, he would probably have added that though fame and friendship and freedom from the harrowing cares of poverty might cause his life to be more equably happy, yet their rewards could represent but a faint and mocking reflection of the best moments of a happy marriage. His strong mind and tender nature reeled under the blow. Here is one pathetic little note written to the friend, Dr. Taylor, who had come to him in his distress. That which first announced the calamity, and which, said Taylor, "expressed grief in the strongest manner he had ever read," is lost.

"Dear Sir,—Let me have your company and instruction. Do not live away from me. My distress is great.

"Pray desire Mrs. Taylor to inform me what mourning I should buy for my mother and Miss Porter, and bring a note in writing with you.

"Remember me in your prayers, for vain is the help of man.

"I am, dear sir,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

We need not regret that a veil is drawn over the details of the bitter agony of his passage through the valley of the shadow of death. It is enough to put down the wails which he wrote long afterwards when vaguely approaching the close of all human emotions and interests:—

"This is the day on which, in 1752, dear Letty died. I have now uttered a prayer of repentance and contrition; perhaps Letty knows that I prayed for her. Perhaps Letty is now praying for me. God help me. Thou, God, art merciful, hear my prayers and enable me to trust in Thee.

"We were married almost seventeen years, and have now been parted thirty."

It seems half profane, even at this distance of time, to pry into grief so deep and so lasting. Johnson turned for relief to that which all sufferers know to be the only remedy for sorrow—hard labour. He set to work in his garret, an inconvenient room, "because," he said, "in that room only I never saw Mrs. Johnson." He helped his friend Hawkesworth in the *Adventurer*, a new periodical of the *Rambler* kind; but his main work was the *Dictionary*, which came out at last in 1755. Its appearance was the occasion of an explosion of wrath which marks an epoch in our literature. Johnson, as we have seen, had dedicated the Plan

to Lord Chesterfield; and his language implies that they had been to some extent in personal communication. Chesterfield's fame is in curious antithesis to Johnson's. He was a man of great abilities, and seems to have deserved high credit for some parts of his statesmanship. As a Viceroy in Ireland in particular he showed qualities rare in his generation. To Johnson he was known as the nobleman who had a wide social influence as an acknowledged *arbiter elegantiarum*, and who reckoned among his claims some of that literary polish in which the earlier generation of nobles had certainly been superior to their successors. The art of life expounded in his *Letters* differs from Johnson as much as the elegant diplomatist differs from the rough intellectual gladiator of Grub Street. Johnson spoke his mind of his rival without reserve. "I thought," he said, "that this man had been a Lord among wits; but I find he is only a wit among Lords." And of the *Letters* he said more keenly that they taught the morals of a harlot and the manners of a dancing-master. Chesterfield's opinion of Johnson is indicated by the description in his *Letters* of a "respectable Hottentot, who throws his meat anywhere but down his throat. This absurd person," said Chesterfield, "was not only uncouth in manners and warm in dispute, but behaved exactly in the same way to superiors, equals, and inferiors; and therefore, by a necessary consequence, absurdly to two of the three. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ!*"

Johnson, in my opinion, was not far wrong in his judgment, though it would be a gross injustice to regard Chesterfield as nothing but a fribble. But men representing two such antithetic types were not likely to admire each other's good qualities. Whatever had been the intercourse between them, Johnson was naturally annoyed when the dignified noble published two articles in the *World*—a periodical supported by such polite personages as himself and Horace Walpole—in which the need of a dictionary was set forth, and various courtly compliments described Johnson's fitness for a dictatorship over the language. Nothing could be more prettily turned; but it meant, and Johnson took it to mean, I should like to have the dictionary dedicated to me: such a compliment would add a feather to my cap, and enable me to appear to the world as a patron of literature as well as an authority upon manners. "After making great professions," as Johnson said, "he had, for many years, taken no notice of me: but when my *Dictionary* was coming out, he fell a scribbling in the *World* about it." Johnson therefore bestowed upon the noble earl a piece of his mind in a letter which was not published till it came out in Boswell's biography.

"My Lord,—I have been lately informed by the proprietor of the *World* that two papers, in which my *Dictionary* is recommended to the public, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

"When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself, *le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the arts of pleasing which a wearied and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

"Seven years, my lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward rooms and was repulsed from your door: during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

"The shepherd in *Virgil* grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

"Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached the ground encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am in different, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit had been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

"Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, should less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my Lord,

"Your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant.

"SAM JOHNSON."

The letter is one of those knock-down blows to which no answer is possible, and upon which comment is superfluous. It was, as Mr. Carlyle calls it, "the far-famed blast of doom proclaiming into the ear of Lord Chesterfield and through him, of the listening world, that patronage should be no more."

That is all that can be said; yet perhaps it should be added that Johnson remarked that he had once received £10 from Chesterfield, though he thought the assistance too inconsiderable to be mentioned in such a letter. Hawkins also states that Chesterfield sent overtures to Johnson through two friends, one of whom, long Sir Thomas Robinson, stated that, if he were rich enough (a judicious clause) he would himself settle £500 year upon Johnson. Johnson replied that if the first peer of the realm made such an offer, he

would show him the way downstairs. Hawkins is startled at this insolence, and at Johnson's uniform assertion that an offer of money was an insult. We cannot tell what was the history of the £10; but Johnson, in spite of Hawkins's righteous indignation, was in fact too proud to be a beggar, and owed to his pride his escape from the fate of Savage.

The appearance of the *Dictionary* placed Johnson in the position described soon afterwards by Smollett. He was henceforth "the great Cham of Literature"—a monarch sitting in the chair previously occupied by his namesake, Ben, by Dryden, and by Pope; but which has since that time been vacant. The world of literature has become too large for such authority. Complaints were not seldom uttered at the time. Goldsmith has urged that Boswell wished to make a monarchy of what ought to be a republic. Goldsmith, who would have been the last man to find serious fault with the dictator, thought the dictatorship objectionable. Some time indeed was still to elapse before we can say that Johnson was firmly seated on the throne; but the *Dictionary* and the *Rambler* had given him a position not altogether easy to appreciate, now that the *Dictionary* has been superseded and the *Rambler* gone out of fashion. His name was the highest at this time (1755) in the ranks of pure literature. The fame of Warburton possibly bulked larger for the moment, and one of his flatterers was comparing him to the Colossus which bestrides the petty world of contemporaries. But Warburton had subsided into episcopal repose, and literature had been for him a stepping-stone rather than an ultimate aim. Hume had written works of far more enduring influence than Johnson; but they were little read though generally abused, and scarcely belong to the purely literary history. The first volume of his *History of England* had appeared (1754), but had not succeeded. The second was just coming out. Richardson was still giving laws to his little seraglio of adoring women; Fielding had died (1754), worn out by labour and dissipation; Smollett was active in the literary trade, but not in such a way as to increase his own dignity or that of his employment; Gray was slowly writing a few lines of exquisite verse in his retirement at Cambridge; two young Irish adventurers, Burke and Goldsmith, were just coming to London to try their fortune; Adam Smith made his first experiment as an author by reviewing the *Dictionary* in the *Edinburgh Review;* Roberston had not yet appeared as a historian; Gibbon was at Lausanne repenting of his old brief lapse into Catholicism as an act of undergraduate's folly; and Cowper, after three years of "giggling and making giggle" with Thurlow in an attorney's office, was now entered at the Temple and amusing himself at times with literature in company with such small men of letters as Colman, Bonnell Thornton, and Lloyd. It was a slack tide of literature; the generation of Pope had passed away and left no successors, and no writer of the time could be put in competition with the giant now known as "Dictionary Johnson."

When the last sheet of the *Dictionary* had been carried to the publisher, Millar, Johnson asked the messenger, "What did he say?" "Sir," said the messenger, "he said, 'Thank God I have done with him.'" "I am glad," replied Johnson, "that he thanks God for anything." Thankfulness for relief from seven years' toil seems to have been Johnson's predominant feeling: and he was not anxious for a time to take any new labours upon his shoulders. Some years passed which have left few traces either upon his personal or his literary history. He contributed a good many reviews in 1756–7 to the *Literary Magazine*, one of which, a review of Soame Jenyns, is amongst his best performances. To a weekly paper he contributed for two years, from April, 1758, to April, 1760, a set of essays called the *Idler*, on the old *Rambler* plan. He did some small literary cobbler's work, receiving a guinea for a prospectus to a newspaper and ten pounds for correcting a volume of poetry. He had advertised in 1756 a new edition of Shakspeare which was to appear by Christmas, 1757: but he dawdled over it so unconscionably that it did not appear for nine years; and then only in consequence of taunts from Churchill, who accused him with too much plausibility of cheating his subscribers.

> He for subscribers baits his hook;
> And takes your cash: but where's the book?
> No matter where; wise fear, you know
> Forbids the robbing of a foe;
> But what to serve our private ends
> Forbids the cheating of our friends?

In truth, his constitutional indolence seems to have gained advantages over him, when the stimulus of a heavy task was removed. In his meditations, there are many complaints of his "sluggishness" and resolutions of amendment. "A kind of strange oblivion has spread over me," he says in April, 1764, "so that I know not what has become of the last years, and perceive that incidents and intelligence pass over me without leaving any impression."

It seems, however, that he was still frequently in difficulties. Letters are preserved showing that in the beginning of 1756, Richardson became surety for him for a debt, and lent him six guineas to release him from arrest. An event which happened three years later illustrates his position and character. In January, 1759, his mother died at the age of ninety, Johnson was unable to come to Lichfield, and some deeply pathetic letters to her and her stepdaughter, who lived with her, record his emotions. Here is the last sad farewell upon the snapping of the most sacred of human ties.

"Dear Honoured Mother," he says in a letter enclosed to Lucy Porter, the step-daughter, "neither your condition nor your character make it fit for me to say much. You have been the best mother, and I believe the best woman in the world. I thank you for your

indulgence to me, and beg forgiveness of all that I have done ill, and all that I have omitted to do well. God grant you His Holy Spirit, and receive you to everlasting happiness for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. Lord Jesus receive your spirit. I am, dear, dear mother,

"Your dutiful son,

"SAMUEL JOHNSON.'

Johnson managed to raise twelve guineas, six of them borrowed from his printer, to send to his dying mother. In order to gain money for her funeral expenses and some small debts, he wrote the story of *Rasselas*. It was composed in the evenings of a single week, and sent to press as it was written. He received £100 for this, perhaps the most successful of his minor writings, and £25 for a second edition. It was widely translated and universally admired. One of the strangest of literary coincidences is the contemporary appearance of this work and Voltaire's *Candide;* to which, indeed, it bears in some respects so strong a resemblance that, but for Johnson's apparent contradiction, we would suppose that he had at least heard some description of its design. The two stories, though widely differing in tone and style, are among the most powerful expressions of the melancholy produced in strong intellects by the sadness and sorrows of the world. The literary excellence of *Candide* has secured for it a wider and more enduring popularity than has fallen to the lot of Johnson's far heavier production. But *Rasselas* is a book of singular force, and bears the most characteristic impression of Johnson's peculiar temperament.

A great change was approaching in Johnson's circumstances. When George III. came to the throne, it struck some of his advisers that it would be well, as Boswell puts it, to open "a new and brighter prospect to men of literary merit." This commendable design was carried out by offering to Johnson a pension of three hundred a year. Considering that such men as Horace Walpole and his like were enjoying sinecures of more than twice as many thousands for being their father's sons, the bounty does not strike one as excessively liberal. It seems to have been really intended as some set-off against other pensions bestowed upon various hangers-on of the Scotch prime minister, Bute. Johnson was coupled with the contemptible scribbler, Shebbeare, who had lately been in the pillory for a Jacobite libel (a "he-bear" and a "she-bear," said the facetious newspapers), and when a few months afterwards a pension of £200 a year was given to the old actor, Sheridan, Johnson growled out that it was time for him to resign his own. Somebody kindly repeated the remark to Sheridan, who would never afterwards speak to Johnson.

The pension, though very welcome to Johnson, who seems to have been in real distress at the time, suggested some difficulty. Johnson had unluckily spoken of a pension in his *Dictionary* as "generally understood to mean pay given to a State hireling for treason to his country." He was assured, however, that he did not

come within the definition; and that the reward was given for what he had done, not for anything he was expected to do. After some hesitation, Johnson consented to accept the payment thus offered without the direct suggestion of any obligation, though it was probably calculated that he would in case of need, be the more ready, as actually happened, to use his pen in defence of authority. He had not compromised his independence and might fairly laugh at angry comments. "I wish," he said afterwards, "that my pension were twice as large, that they might make twice as much noise." "I cannot now curse the House of Hanover," was his phrase on another occasion; "but I think that the pleasure of cursing the House of Hanover and drinking King James's health, all amply overbalanced by three hundred pounds a year." In truth, his Jacobitism was by this time, whatever it had once been, nothing more than a humorous crotchet, giving opportunity for the expression of Tory prejudice.

"I hope you will now purge and live cleanly like a gentleman," was Beauclerk's comment upon hearing of his friend's accession of fortune, and as Johnson is now emerging from Grub Street, it is desirable to consider what manner of man was to be presented to the wider circles that were opening to receive him.

CHAPTER III.

JOHNSON AND HIS FRIENDS.

It is not till some time after Johnson had come into the enjoyment of his pension, that we first see him through the eyes of competent observers. The Johnson of our knowledge, the most familiar figure to all students of English literary history had already long passed the prime of life, and done the greatest part of his literary work. His character, in the common phrase, had been "formed" years before; as, indeed, people's characters are chiefly formed in the cradle; and, not only his character, but the habits which are learnt in the great schoolroom of the world were fixed beyond any possibility of change. The strange eccentricities which had now become a second nature, amazed the society in which he was for over twenty years a prominent figure. Unsympathetic observers, those especially to whom the Chesterfield type represented the ideal of humanity, were simply disgusted or repelled. The man, they thought, might be in his place at a Grub Street pot-house; but had no business in a lady's drawing-room. If he had been modest and retiring, they might have put up with his defects; but Johnson was not a person whose qualities, good or bad, were of a kind to be ignored. Naturally enough, the fashionable world cared little for the rugged old giant. "The great," said Johnson, "had tried him and given him up; they had seen enough of him:" and his reason was pretty much to the purpose. "Great lords and great ladies don't love to have their mouths stopped," especially not, one may add, by an unwashed fist.

It is easy to blame them now. Everybody can see that a saint in beggar's rags is intrinsically better than a sinner in gold lace. But the principle is one of those which serves us for judging the dead, much more than for regulating our own conduct. Those, at any rate, may throw the first stone at the Horace Walpoles and Chesterfields, who are quite certain that they would ask a modern Johnson to their houses. The trial would be severe. Poor Mrs. Boswell complained grievously of her husband's idolatry. "I have seen many a bear led by a man," she said; "but I never before saw a man led by a bear." The truth is, as Boswell explains, that the sage's uncouth habits, such as turning the candles' heads downwards to make them burn more brightly, and letting the wax drop upon the carpet, "could not but be disagreeable to a lady."

He had other habits still more annoying to people of delicate perceptions. A hearty despiser of all affectations, he despised especially the affectation of indifference to the pleasures of the table. "For my part," he said, "I mind my belly very studiously and very carefully, for I look upon it that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind anything else." Avowing this principle he would innocently give himself the airs of a scientific epicure. "I, madam," he said to the terror of a lady with whom he was about to sup, "who live at a variety of good tables, am a much better judge of cookery than any person who has a very tolerable cook, but lives much at home, for his palate is gradually adapted to the taste of his cook, whereas, madam, in trying by a wider range, I can more exquisitely judge." But his pretensions to exquisite taste are by no means borne out by independent witnesses. "He laughs," said Tom Davies, "like a rhinoceros," and he seems to have eaten like a wolf—savagely, silently, and with undiscriminating fury. He was not a pleasant object during this performance. He was totally absorbed in the business of the moment, strong perspiration came out, and the veins of his forehead swelled. He liked coarse satisfying dishes—boiled pork and veal-pie stuffed with plums and sugar; and in regard to wine, he seems to have accepted the doctrines of the critic of a certain fluid professing to be port, who asked, "What more can you want? It is black, and it is thick, and it makes you drunk." Claret, as Johnson put it, "is the liquor for boys, and port for men; but he who aspires to be a hero must drink brandy." He could, however, refrain, though he could not be moderate, and for all the latter part of his life, from 1766, he was a total abstainer. Nor, it should be added, does he ever appear to have sought for more than exhilaration from wine. His earliest intimate friend, Hector, said that he had never but once seen him drunk.

His appetite for more innocent kinds of food was equally excessive. He would eat seven or eight peaches before breakfast, and declared that he had only once in his life had as much wall-fruit as he wished. His consumption of tea was prodigious, beyond all precedent. Hawkins quotes Bishop Burnet as having drunk sixteen large cups every morning, a feat which would entitle him to be reckoned as a rival. "A hardened and shameless tea-drinker." Johnson called himself, who "with tea amuses the evenings, with tea solaces the midnights, and with tea welcomes the mornings." One of his teapots, preserved by a relic-hunter, contained two quarts, and he professed to have consumed five and twenty cups at a sitting. Poor Mrs. Thrale complains that he often kept her up making tea for him till four in the morning. His reluctance to go to bed was due to the fact that his nights were periods of intense misery; but the vast potations of tea can scarcely have tended to improve them.

The huge frame was clad in the raggedest of garments, until his acquaintance with the Thrales led to a partial reform. His wigs were generally burnt in front, from his shortsighted knack of

reading with his head close to the candle; and at the Thrales, the butler stood ready to effect a change of wigs as he passed into the dining-room. Once or twice we have accounts of his bursting into unusual splendour. He appeared at the first representation of *Irene* in a scarlet waistcoat laced with gold; and on one of his first interviews with Goldsmith he took the trouble to array himself decently, because Goldsmith was reported to have justified slovenly habits by the precedent of the leader of his craft. Goldsmith, judging by certain famous suits, seems to have profited by the hint more than his preceptor. As a rule, Johnson's appearance, before he became a pensioner, was worthy of the proverbial manner of Grub Street. Beauclerk used to describe how he had once taken a French lady of distinction to see Johnson in his chambers. On descending the staircase they heard a noise like thunder. Johnson was pursuing them, struck by a sudden sense of the demands upon his gallantry. He brushed in between Beauclerk and the lady, and seizing her hand conducted her to her coach. A crowd of people collected to stare at the sage, dressed in rusty brown, with a pair of old shoes for slippers, a shrivelled wig on the top of his head, and with shirtsleeves and the knees of his breeches hanging loose. In those days, clergymen and physicians were only just abandoning the use of their official costume in the streets, and Johnson's slovenly habits were even more marked than they would be at present. "I have no passion for clean linen," he once remarked, and it is to be feared that he must sometimes have offended more senses than one.

In spite of his uncouth habits of dress and manners, Johnson claimed, and in a sense, with justice, to be a polite man. "I look upon myself," he said once to Boswell "as a very polite man." He could show the stately courtesy of a sound Tory, who cordially accepts the principle of social distinction, but has far too strong a sense of self-respect to fancy that compliance with the ordinary conventions can possibly lower his own position. Rank of the spiritual kind was especially venerable to him. "I should as soon have thought of contradicting a bishop," was a phrase which marked the highest conceivable degree of deference to a man whom he respected. Nobody, again, could pay more effective compliments, when he pleased; and the many female friends who have written of him who agree, that he could be singularly attractive to women. Women are, perhaps, more inclined than men to forgive external roughness in consideration of the great charm of deep tenderness in a thoroughly masculine nature. A characteristic phrase was his remark to Miss Monckton. She had declared, in opposition to one of Johnson's prejudices, that Sterne's writings were pathetic: "I am sure," she said, "they have affected me." "Why," said Johnson, smiling and rolling himself about, "that is because, dearest, you are a dunce!" When she mentioned this to him some time afterwards he replied: "Madam, if I had thought so, I certainly should not have said it." The truth could not be more neatly put.

Boswell notes, with some surprise, that when Johnson dined

with Lord Monboddo he insisted upon rising when the ladies left the table, and took occasion to observe that politeness was "fictitious benevolence," and equally useful in common intercourse. Boswell's surprise seems to indicate that Scotchmen in those days were even greater bears than Johnson. He always insisted, as Miss Reynolds tells us, upon showing ladies to their carriages through Bolt Court, though his dress was such that her readers would, she thinks, be astonished that any man in his senses should have shown himself in it abroad or even at home. Another odd indication of Johnson's regard for good manners, so far as his lights would take him, was the extreme disgust with which he often referred to a certain footman in Paris, who used his fingers in place of sugar-tongs. So far as Johnson could recognise bad manners he was polite enough, though unluckily the limitation is one of considerable importance.

Johnson's claim to politeness were sometimes, it is true, put in a rather startling form. "Every man of any education," he once said to the amazement of his hearers, "would rather be called a rascal than accused of deficiency in the graces." Gibbon, who was present, slily inquired of a lady whether among all her acquaintance she could not find *one* exception. According to Mrs. Thrale, he went even further. Dr. Barnard, he said, was the only man who had ever done justice to his good breeding; "and you may observe," he added, "that I am well-bred to a degree of needless scrupulosity." He proceeded, according to Mrs Thrale, but the report a little taxes our faith, to claim the virtues not only of respecting ceremony, but of never contradicting or interrupting his hearers. It is rather odd that Dr. Barnard had once a sharp altercation with Johnson, and avenged himself by a sarcastic copy of verses in which, after professing to learn perfectness from different friends, he says,—

> Johnson shall teach me how to place,
> In varied light, each borrow'd grace;
> From him I'll learn to write;
> Copy his clear familiar style,
> And by the roughness of his file,
> Grow, like himself, polite.

Johnson, on this as on many occasions, repented of the blow as soon as it was struck, and sat down by Barnard, "literally smoothing down his arms and knees," and beseeching pardon. Barnard accepted his apologies, but went home and wrote his little copy of verses.

Johnson's shortcomings in civility were no doubt due, in part, to the narrowness of his faculties of perception. He did not know, for he could not see, that his uncouth gestures and slovenly dress were offensive; and he was not so well able to observe others as to shake off the manners contracted in Grub Street. It is hard to study a manual of etiquette late in life, and for a man of Johnson's imper-

fect faculties it was probably impossible. Errors of this kind were always pardonable, and are now simply ludicrous. But Johnson often shocked his companions by more indefensible conduct. He was irascible, overbearing, and, when angry, vehement beyond all propriety. He was "a tremendous companion," said Garrick's brother; and men of gentle nature, like Charles Fox, often shrank from his company, and perhaps exaggerated his brutality.

Johnson, who had long regarded conversation as the chief amusement, came in later years to regard it as almost the chief employment of life; and he had studied the art with the zeal of a man pursuing a favourite hobby. He had always, as he told Sir Joshua Reynolds, made it a principle to talk on all occasions as well as he could. He had thus obtained a mastery over his weapons which made him one of the most accomplished of conversational gladiators. He had one advantage which has pretty well disappeared from modern society, and the disappearance of which has been destructive to excellence of talk. A good talker, even more than a good orator, implies a good audience. Modern society is too vast and too restless to give a conversationalist a fair chance. For the formation of real proficiency in the art, friends should meet often, sit long, and be thoroughly at ease. A modern audience generally breaks up before it is well warmed through, and includes enough strangers to break the magic circle of social electricity. The clubs in which Johnson delighted were excellently adapted to foster his peculiar talent. There a man could "fold his legs and have his talk out"—a pleasure hardly to be enjoyed now. And there a set of friends meeting regularly, and meeting to talk, learnt to sharpen each other's skill in all dialectic manœuvres. Conversation may be pleasantest, as Johnson admitted, when two friends meet quietly to exchange their minds without any thought of display. But conversation considered as a game, as a bout of intellectual sword-play, has also charms which Johnson intensely appreciated. His talk was not of the encyclopædia variety, like that of some more modern celebrities; but it was full of apposite illustrations and unrivalled in keen argument, rapid flashes of wit and humour, scornful retort and dexterous sophistry. Sometimes he would fell his adversary at a blow; his sword, as Boswell said, would be through your body in an instant without preliminary flourishes; and in the excitement of talking for victory, he would use any device that came to hand. "There is no arguing with Johnson," said Goldsmith, quoting a phrase from Cibber, "for if his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt-end of it."

Johnson's view of conversation is indicated by his remark about Burke. "That fellow," he said at a time of illness, "calls forth all my powers. Were I to see Burke now, it would kill me." "It is when you come close to a man in conversation," he said on another occasion, "that you discover what his real abilities are. To make a speech in an assembly is a knack. Now I honour Thurlow, sir; Thurlow is a fine fellow, he fairly puts his mind to yours."

Johnson's retorts were fair play under the conditions of the

game, as it is fair play to kick an opponent's shins at football. But of course a man who had, as it were, become the acknowledged champion of the ring, and who had an irascible and thoroughly dogmatic temper, was tempted to become unduly imperious. In the company of which Savage was a distinguished member, one may guess that the conversational fervour sometimes degenerated into horse-play. Want of arguments would be supplied by personality, and the champion would avenge himself by brutality on an opponent who happened for once to be getting the best of him. Johnson, as he grew older and got into more polished society, became milder in his manners; but he had enough of the old spirit left in him to break forth at times with ungovernable fury, and astonish the well-regulated minds of respectable ladies and gentlemen.

Anecdotes illustrative of this ferocity abound, and his best friends—except, perhaps, Reynolds and Burke—had all to suffer in turn. On one occasion, when he had made a rude speech even to Reynolds, Boswell states, though with some hesitation, his belief that Johnson actually blushed. The records of his contests in this kind fill a large space in Boswell's pages. That they did not lead to worse consequences shows his absence of rancour. He was always ready and anxious for a reconciliation, though he would not press for one if his first overtures were rejected. There was no venom in the wounds he inflicted, for there was no ill-nature; he was rough in the heat of the struggle, and in such cases careless in distributing blows; but he never enjoyed giving pain. None of his tiffs ripened into permanent quarrels, and he seems scarcely to have lost a friend. He is a pleasant contrast in this, as in much else, to Horace Walpole, who succeeded, in the course of a long life, in breaking with almost all his old friends. No man set a higher value upon friendship than Johnson. "A man," he said to Reynolds, "ought to keep his friendship in constant repair;" or he would find himself left alone as he grew older. "I look upon a day as lost," he said later in life, "in which I do not make a new acquaintance." Making new acquaintances did not involve dropping the old. The list of his friends is a long one, and includes, as it were, successive layers, superposed upon each other, from the earliest period of his life.

This is so marked a feature in Johnson's character, that it will be as well at this point to notice some of the friendships from which he derived the greatest part of his happiness. Two of his schoolfellows, Hector and Taylor, remained his intimates through life. Hector survived to give information to Boswell, and Taylor, then a prebendary of Westminster, read the funeral service over his old friend in the Abbey. He showed, said some of the bystanders, too little feeling. The relation between the two men was not one of special tenderness; indeed they were so little congenial that Boswell rather gratuitously suspected his venerable teacher of having an eye to Taylor's will. It seems fairer to regard the acquaintance as an illustration of that curious adhesiveness which made Johnson cling to less attractive persons. At any rate, he did not

show the complacence of the proper will-hunter. Taylor was rector of Bosworth and squire of Ashbourne He was a fine specimen of the squire-parson; a justice of the peace, a warm politician, and what was worse, a warm Whig. He raised gigantic bulls, bragged of selling cows for 120 guineas and more, and kept a noble butler in purple clothes and a large white wig. Johnson respected Taylor as a sensible man, but was ready to have a round with him on occasion. He snorted contempt when Taylor talked of breaking some small vessels if he took an emetic. "Bah," said the doctor, who regarded a valetudinarian as a "scoundrel," "if you have so many things that will break, you had better break your neck at once, and there's an end on't." Nay, if he did not condemn Taylor's cows, he criticised his bulldog with cruel acuteness. "No, sir, he is not well-shaped; for there is not the quick transition from the thickness of the fore-part to the *tenuity*—the thin part—behind, which a bulldog ought to have." On the more serious topic of politics his Jacobite fulminations roused Taylor "to a pitch of bellowing." Johnson roared out that if the people of England were fairly polled (this was in 1777) the present king would be sent away to-night, and his adherents hanged to-morrow. Johnson, however, rendered Taylor the substantial service of writing sermons for him, two volumes of which were published after they were both dead; and Taylor must have been a bold man, if it be true, as has been said, that he refused to preach a sermon written by Johnson upon Mrs. Johnson's death, on the ground that it spoke too favourably of the character of the deceased.

Johnson paid frequent visits to Lichfield, to keep up his old friends. One of them was Lucy Porter, his wife's daughter, with whom, according to Miss Seward, he had been in love before he married her mother. He was at least tenderly attached to her through life. And, for the most part, the good people of Lichfield seem to have been proud of their fellow-townsman, and gave him a substantial proof of their sympathy by continuing to him, on favourable terms, the lease of a house originally granted to his father. There was, indeed, one remarkable exception in Miss Seward, who belonged to a genus specially contemptible to the old doctor. She was one of the fine ladies who dabbled in poetry, and aimed at being the centre of a small literary circle at Lichfield. Her letters are amongst the most amusing illustrations of the petty affectations and squabbles characteristic of such a provincial clique. She evidently hated Johnson at the bottom of her small soul; and, indeed, though Johnson once paid her a preposterous compliment—a weakness of which this stern moralist was apt to be guilty in the company of ladies—he no doubt trod pretty roughly upon some of her pet vanities.

By far the most celebrated of Johnson's Lichfield friends was David Garrick, in regard to whom his relations were somewhat peculiar. Reynolds said that Johnson considered Garrick to be his own property, and would never allow him to be praised or blamed by any one else without contradiction. Reynolds composed a pair

of imaginary dialogues to illustrate the proposition, in one of which Johnson attacks Garrick in answer to Reynolds, and in the other defends him in answer to Gibbon. The dialogues seem to be very good reproductions of the Johnsonian manner, though perhaps the courteous Reynolds was a little too much impressed by its roughness; and they probably include many genuine remarks of Johnson's. It is remarkable that the praise is far more pointed and elaborate than the blame, which turns chiefly upon the general inferiority of an actor's position. And, in fact, this seems to have corresponded to Johnson's opinion about Garrick as gathered from Boswell.

The two men had at bottom a considerable regard for each other, founded upon old association, mutual services, and reciprocal respect for talents of very different orders. But they were so widely separated by circumstances, as well as by a radical opposition of temperament, that any close intimacy could hardly be expected. The bear and the monkey are not likely to be intimate friends. Garrick's rapid elevation in fame and fortune seems to have produced a certain degree of envy in his old schoolmaster. A grave moral philosopher has, of course, no right to look askance at the rewards which fashion lavishes upon men of lighter and less lasting merit, and which he professes to despise. Johnson, however, was troubled with a rather excessive allowance of human nature. Moreover he had the good old-fashioned contempt for players, characteristic both of the Tory and the inartistic mind. He asserted roundly that he looked upon players as no better than dancing-dogs. "But, sir, you will allow that some players are better than others?" "Yes, sir, as some dogs dance better than others." So when Goldsmith accused Garrick of grossly flattering the queen, Johnson exclaimed, "And as to meanness—how is it mean in a player, a showman, a fellow who exhibits himself for a shilling, to flatter his queen?" At another time Boswell suggested that we might respect a great player. "What! sir," exclaimed Johnson, "a fellow who claps a hump upon his back and a lump on his leg and cries, '*I am Richard III.*'? Nay, sir, a ballad-singer is is a higher man, for he does two things: he repeats and he sings; there is both recitation and music in his performance—the player only recites."

Such sentiments were not very likely to remain unknown to Garrick nor to put him at ease with Johnson, whom, indeed, he always suspected of laughing at him. They had a little tiff on account of Johnson's Edition of Shakspeare. From some misunderstanding, Johnson did not make use of Garrick's collection of old plays. Johnson, it seems, thought that Garrick should have courted him more, and perhaps sent the plays to his house; whereas Garrick, knowing that Johnson treated books with a roughness ill-suited to their constitution, thought that he had done quite enough by asking Johnson to come to his library. The revenge—if it was revenge—taken by Johnson was to say nothing of Garrick in his Preface, and to glance obliquely at his non-communication of his

rarities. He seems to have thought that it would be a lowering of Shakspeare to admit that his fame owed anything to Garrick's exertions.

Boswell innocently communicated to Garrick a criticism of Johnson's upon one of his poems—

I'd smile with the simple and feed with the poor.

"Let me smile with the wise, and feed with the rich," was Johnson's tolerably harmless remark. Garrick, however, did not like it, and when Boswell tried to console him by saying that Johnson gored everybody in turn, and added, "*fœnum habet in cornu.*" "Ay," said Garrick vehemently, "he has a whole mow of it."

The most unpleasant incident was when Garrick proposed rather too freely to be a member of the Club. Johnson said that the first duke in England had no right to use such language, and said, according to Mrs. Thrale, "If Garrick does apply, I'll blackball him. Surely we ought to be able to sit in a society like ours—

'Unelbowed by a gamester, pimp, or player!'"

Nearly ten years afterwards, however, Johnson favoured his election, and when he died, declared that the Club should have a year's widowhood. No successor to Garrick was elected during that time.

Johnson sometimes ventured to criticise Garrick's acting, but here Garrick could take his full revenge. The purblind Johnson was not, we may imagine, much of a critic in such matters. Garrick reports him to have said of an actor at Lichfield, "There is a courtly vivacity about the fellow;" when, in fact, said Garrick, "he was the most vulgar ruffian that ever went upon boards."

In spite of such collisions of opinion and mutual criticism, Johnson seems to have spoken in the highest terms of Garrick's good qualities, and they had many pleasant meetings. Garrick takes a prominent part in two or three of the best conversations in Boswell, and seems to have put his interlocutors in specially good temper. Johnson declared him to be "the first man in the world for sprightly conversation." He said that Dryden had written much better prologues than any of Garrick's, but that Garrick had written more good prologues than Dryden. He declared that it was wonderful how little Garrick had been spoilt by all the flattery that he had received. No wonder if he was a little vain: "a man who is perpetually flattered in every mode that can be conceived: so many bellows have blown the fuel, that one wonders he is not by this time become a cinder!" "If all this had happened to me," he said on another occasion, "I should have had a couple of fellows with long poles walking before me, to knock down everybody that stood in the way. Consider, if all this had happened to Cibber and Quin, they'd have jumped over the moon. Yet Garrick speaks to us," smiling. He admitted at the same time that Garrick had

raised the profession of a player. He defended Garrick, too, against the common charge of avarice. Garrick, as he pointed out, had been brought up in a family whose study it was to make fourpence go as far as fourpence-halfpenny. Johnson remembered in early days drinking tea with Garrick when Peg Woffington made it, and made it, as Garrick grumbled, "as red as blood." But when Garrick became rich he became liberal. He had, so Johnson declared, given away more money than any man in England.

After Garrick's death, Johnson took occasion to say, in the *Lives of the Poets*, that the death "had eclipsed the gaiety of nations and diminished the public stock of harmless pleasures." Boswell ventured to criticise the observation rather spitefully. "Why *nations?* Did his gaiety extend further than his own nation?" "Why, sir," replied Johnson, "some imagination must be allowed. Besides, we may say *nations* if we allow the Scotch to be a nation, and to have gaiety—which they have not." On the whole, in spite of various drawbacks, Johnson's reported observations upon Garrick will appear to be discriminative, and yet, on the whole, strongly favourable to his character. Yet we are not quite surprised that Mrs. Garrick did not respond to a hint thrown out by Johnson, that he would be glad to write the life of his friend.

At Oxford, Johnson acquired the friendship of Dr. Adams, afterwards Master of Pembroke and author of a once well-known reply to Hume's argument upon miracles. He was an amiable man, and was proud to do the honours of the university to his old friend, when, in later years, Johnson revisited the much-loved scenes of his neglected youth. The warmth of Johnson's regard for old days is oddly illustrated by an interview recorded by Boswell with one Edwards, a fellow-student whom he met again in 1778, not having previously seen him since 1729. They had lived in London for forty years without once meeting, a fact more surprising then than now. Boswell eagerly gathered up the little scraps of college anecdote which the meeting produced, but perhaps his best find was a phrase of Edwards himself. "You are a philosopher, Dr. Johnson," he said; "I have tried, too, in my time to be a philosopher; but, I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in." The phrase, as Boswell truly says, records an exquisite trait of character.

Of the friends who gathered round Johnson during his period of struggle, many had vanished before he became well known. The best loved of all seems to have been Dr. Bathurst, a physician, who, failing to obtain practice, joined the expedition to Havannah, and fell a victim to the climate (1762). Upon him Johnson pronounced a panegyric which has contributed a proverbial phrase to the language. "Dear Bathurst," he said, "was a man to my very heart's content: he hated a fool and he hated a rogue, and he hated a Whig; he was a *very good hater*." Johnson remembered Bathurst in his prayers for years after his loss, and received from him a peculiar legacy. Francis Barber had been the negro slave

of Bathurst's father, who left him his liberty by will. Dr. Bathurst allowed him to enter Johnson's service; and Johnson sent him to school at considerable expense, and afterwards retained him in his service with little interruption till his own death. Once Barber ran away to sea, and was discharged, oddly enough, by the good offices of Wilkes, to whom Smollett applied on Johnson's behalf. Barber became an important member of Johnson's family, some of whom reproached him for his liberality to the nigger. No one ever solved the great problem as to what services were rendered by Barber to his master, whose wig was "as impenetrable by a comb as a quickset hedge," and whose clothes were never touched by the brush.

Among the other friends of this period must be reckoned his biographer, Hawkins, an attorney who was afterwards Chairman of the Middlesex Justices, and knighted on presenting an address to the King. Boswell regarded poor Sir John Hawkins with all the animosity of a rival author, and with some spice of wounded vanity. He was grievously offended, so at least says Sir John's daughter, on being described in the *Life of Johnson* as "Mr. James Boswell" without a solitary epithet such as celebrated or well-known. If that was really his feeling, he had his revenge; for no one book ever so suppressed another as Boswell's Life suppressed Hawkins's. In truth, Hawkins was a solemn prig, remarkable chiefly for the unusual intensity of his conviction that all virtue consists in respectability. He had a special aversion to "goodness of heart," which he regarded as another name for a quality properly called extravagance or vice. Johnson's tenacity of old acquaintance introduced him into the Club, where he made himself so disagreeable, especially, as it seems, by rudeness to Burke, that he found it expedient to invent a pretext for resignation. Johnson called him a "very unclubable man," and may perhaps have intended him in the quaint description: "I really believe him to be an honest man at the bottom; though, to be sure, he is rather penurious, and he is somewhat mean; and it must be owned he has some degree of brutality, and is not without a tendency to savageness that cannot well be defended."

In a list of Johnson's friends it is proper to mention Richardson and Hawkesworth. Richardson seems to have given him substantial help, and was repaid by favourable comparisons with Fielding, scarcely borne out by the verdict of posterity. "Fielding," said Johnson, "could tell the hour by looking at the clock; whilst Richardson knew how the clock was made." "There is more knowledge of the heart," he said at another time, "in one letter of Richardson's than in all *Tom Jones*. Johnson's preference of the sentimentalist to the man whose humour and strong sense were so like his own, shows how much his criticism was biassed by his prejudices; though, of course, Richardson's external decency was a recommendation to the moralist. Hawkesworth's intimacy with Johnson seems to have been chiefly in the period between the *Dictionary* and the pension. He was consid-

ered to be Johnson's best imitator; and has vanished like other imitators. His fate, very doubtful if the story believed at the time be true, was a curious one for a friend of Johnson's. He had made some sceptical remarks as to the efficacy of prayer in his preface to the South Sea Voyages; and was so bitterly attacked by a "Christian" in the papers, that he destroyed himself by a dose of opium.

Two younger friends, who became disciples of the sage soon after the appearance of the *Rambler*, are prominent figures in the later circle. One of these was Bennet Langton, a man of good family, fine scholarship, and very amiable character. His exceedingly tall and slender figure was compared by Best to the stork in Raphael's cartoon of the Miraculous Draught of Fishes. Miss Hawkins describes him sitting with one leg twisted round the other as though to occupy the smallest possible space, and playing with his gold snuff-box with a mild countenance and sweet smile. The gentle, modest creature was loved by Johnson, who could warm into unusual eloquence in singing his praises. The doctor, however, was rather fond of discussing with Boswell the faults of his friend. They seem to have chiefly consisted in a certain languor or sluggishness of temperament which allowed his affairs to get into perplexity. Once, when arguing the delicate question as to the propriety of telling a friend of his wife's unfaithfulness, Boswell, after his peculiar fashion, chose to enliven the abstract statement by the purely imaginary hypothesis of Mr. and Mrs. Langton being in this position. Johnson said that it would be useless to tell Langton, because he would be too sluggish to get a divorce. Once Langton was the unconscious cause of one of Johnson's oddest performances. Langton had employed Chambers, a common friend of his and Johnson's, to draw his will. Johnson, talking to Chambers and Boswell, was suddenly struck by the absurdity of his friend's appearing in the character of testator. His companions, however, were utterly unable to see in what the joke consisted; but Johnson laughed obstreperously and irrepressibly: he laughed till he reached the Temple Gate; and when in Fleet Street went almost into convulsions of hilarity. Holding on by one of the posts in the street, he sent forth such peals of laughter that they seemed in the silence of the night to resound from Temple Bar to Fleet Ditch.

Not long before his death, Johnson applied to Langton for spiritual advice. "I desired him to tell me sincerely in what he thought my life was faulty." Langton wrote upon a sheet of paper certain texts recommending Christian charity; and explained, upon inquiry, that he was pointing at Johnson's habit of contradiction. The old doctor began by thanking him earnestly for his kindness; but gradually waxed savage and asked Langton, "in a loud and angry tone, What is your drift, sir?" He complained of the well-meant advice to Boswell, with a sense that he had been unjustly treated. It was a scene for a comedy, as Reynolds observed, to see a penitent get into a passion and belabour his confessor.

Through Langton, Johnson became acquainted with the friend whose manner was in the strongest contrast to his own. Topham Beauclerk was a man of fashion. He was commended to Johnson by a likeness to Charles II., from whom he was descended, being the grandson of the first Duke of St. Alban's. Beauclerk was a man of literary and scientific tastes. He inherited some of the moral laxity which Johnson chose to pardon in his ancestor. Some years after his acquaintance with Boswell he married Lady Diana Spencer, a lady who had been divorced upon his account from her husband, Lord Bolingbroke. But he took care not to obtrude his faults of life, whatever they may have been, upon the old moralist, who entertained for him a peculiar affection. He specially admired Beauclerk's skill in the use of a more polished, if less vigorous, style of conversation than his own. He envied the ease with which Beauclerk brought out his sly incisive retorts. "No man," he said, "ever was so free when he was going to say a good thing, from a look that expressed that it was coming; or, when he had said it, from a look that expressed that it had come." When Beauclerk was dying (in 1780), Johnson said, with a faltering voice, that he would walk to the extremity of the diameter of the earth to save him. Two little anecdotes are expressive of his tender feeling for this incongruous friend. Boswell had asked him to sup at Beauclerk's. He started, but, on the way, recollecting himself, said, "I cannot go; but *I do not love Beauclerk the less.*" Beauclerk had put upon a portrait of Johnson the inscription,—

> Ingenium ingens
> Inculto latet hoc sub corpore.

Langto who bought the portrait, had the inscription removed. "It was kind in you to take it off," said Johnson; and, after a short pause, "not unkind in him to put it on."

Early in their acquaintance, the two young men, Beau and Lanky, as Johnson called them, had set up one night at a tavern till three in the morning. The courageous thought struck them that they would knock up the old philosopher. He came to the door of his chambers, poker in hand, with an old wig for a nightcap. On hearing their errand, the sage exclaimed, "What! is it you, you dogs? I'll have a frisk with you." And so Johnson with the two youths, his juniors by about thirty years, proceeded to make a night of it. They amazed the fruiterers in Covent Garden; they brewed a bowl of bishop in a tavern, while Johnson quoted the poet's address to Sleep,—

> "Short, A short, be then thy reign,
> And give us to the world again!"

They took a boat to Billingsgate, and Johnson, with Beauclerk, kept up their amusement for the following day, when Langton deserted them to go to breakfast with some young ladies, and Johnson scolded him for leaving his friends "to go and sit with a parcel

of wretched *unidea'd* girls." "I shall have my old friend to bail out of the round-house," said Garrick when he heard of this queer alliance; and he told Johnson that he would be in the *Chronicle* for his frolic. "He *durst* not do such a thing. His wife would not let him," was the moralist's retort.

Some friends, known to fame by other titles than their connexion with Johnson, had by this time gathered round them. Among them was one, whose art he was unable to appreciate, but whose fine social qualities and dignified equability of temper made him a valued and respected companion. Reynolds had settled in London at the end of 1752. Johnson met him at the house of Miss Cotterell. Reynolds had specially admired Johnson's *Life of Savage*, and, on their first meeting, happened to make a remark which delighted Johnson. The ladies were regretting the loss of a friend to whom they were under obligations. "You have, however," said Reynolds, "the comfort of being relieved from a burden of gratitude." The saying is a little too much like Rochefoucauld, and too true to be pleasant; but it was one of those keen remarks which Johnson appreciated because they prick a bubble of commonplace moralising without demanding too literal an acceptation. He went home to sup with Reynolds and became his intimate friend. On another occasion, Johnson was offended by two ladies of rank at the same house, and by way of taking down their pride, asked Reynolds in a loud voice, "How much do you think you and I could get in a week, if we both worked as hard as we could?" "His appearance," says Sir Joshua's sister, Miss Reynolds, "might suggest the poor author: as he was not likely in that place to be a blacksmith or a porter." Poor Miss Reynolds, who tells this story, was another attraction to Reynolds' house. She was a shy, retiring maiden lady, who vexed her famous brother by following in his steps without his talents, and was deeply hurt by his annoyance at the unintentional mockery. Johnson was through life a kind and judicious friend to her; and had attracted her on their first meeting by a significant indication of his character. He said that when going home to his lodgings at one or two in the morning, he often saw poor children asleep on thresholds and stalls—the wretched "street Arabs" of the day—and that he used to put pennies into their hands that they might buy a breakfast.

Two friends, who deserve to beplaced beside Reynolds, came from Ireland to seek their fortunes in London. Edmund Burke, incomparably the greatest writer upon political philosophy in English literature, the master of a style unrivalled for richness, flexibility, and vigour, was radically opposed to Johnson on party questions, though his language upon the French Revolution, after Johnson's death, would have satisfied even the strongest prejudices of his old friend. But he had qualities which commended him even to the man who called him a "bottomless Whig," and who generally spoke of Whigs as rascals, and maintained that the first Whig was the devil. If his intellect was wider, his heart was as warm as Johnson's, and in conversation he merited the generous ap-

plause and warm emulation of his friends. Johnson was never tired of praising the extraordinary readiness and spontaneity of Burke's conversation. "If a man," he said, "went under a shed at the same time with Burke to avoid a shower, he would say, 'This is an extraordinary man.' Or if Burke went into a stable to see his horse dressed, the ostler would say, 'We have had an extraordinary man here.'" When Burke was first going into Parliament, Johnson said in answer to Hawkins, who wondered that such a man should get a seat, "We who know Mr. Burke, know that he will be one of the first men in the country." Speaking of certain other members of Parliament, more after the heart of Sir John Hawkins, he said that he grudged success to a man who made a figure by a knowledge of a few forms, though his mind was "as narrow as the neck of a vinegar cruet;" but then he did not grudge Burke's being the first man in the House of Commons, for he would be the first man everywhere. And Burke equally admitted Johnson's supremacy in conversation. "It is enough for me," he said to some one who regretted Johnson's monopoly of the talk on a particular occasion, "to have rung the bell for him."

The other Irish adventurer, whose career was more nearly moulded upon that of Johnson, came to London in 1756, and made Johnson's acquaintance. Some time afterwards (in or before 1761) Goldsmith, like Johnson, had tasted the bitterness of an usher's life, and escaped into the scarcely more tolerable region of Grub Street. After some years of trial, he was becoming known to the booksellers as a serviceable hand, and had two works in his desk destined to lasting celebrity. His landlady (apparently 1764) one day arrested him for debt. Johnson, summoned to his assistance, sent him a guinea and speedily followed. The guinea had already been changed, and Goldsmith was consoling himself with a bottle of Maderia. Johnson corked the bottle, and a discussion of ways and means brought out the manuscript of the *Vicar of Wakefield.* Johnson looked into it, took it to a bookseller, got sixty pounds for it, and returned to Goldsmith, who paid his rent and administered a sound rating to his landlady.

The relation thus indicated is characteristic; Johnson was as a rough but helpful elder brother to poor Goldsmith, gave him advice, sympathy, and applause, and at times criticised him pretty sharply, or brought down his conversational bludgeon upon his sensitive friend. "He has nothing of the bear but his skin," was Goldsmith's comment upon his clumsy friend, and the two men appreciated each other at bottom. Some of their readers may be inclined to resent Johnson's attitude of superiority. The admirably pure and tender heart, and the exquisite intellectual refinement implied in the *Vicar* and the *Traveller*, force us to love Goldsmith in spite of superficial foibles, and when Johnson prunes or interpolates lines in the *Traveller*, we feel as though a woodman's axe was hacking at a most delicate piece of carving. The evidence of contemporary observers, however, must force impartial readers to admit that Goldsmith's foibles were real, however amply compensated by

rare and admirable qualities. Garrick's assertion, that he "wrote like an angel but talked like poor Poll," expresses the unanimous opinion of all who had actually seen him. Undoubtedly some of the stories of his childish vanity, his frankly expressed envy, and his general capacity for blundering, owe something to Boswell's feeling that he was a rival near the throne, and sometimes poor Goldsmith's humorous self-assertion may have been taken too seriously by blunt English wits. One may doubt, for example, whether he was really jealous of a puppet tossing a pike, and unconscious of his absurdity in saying "Pshaw! I could do it better myself!" Boswell, however, was too good an observer to misrepresent at random, and he has, in fact, explained very well the true meaning of his remarks. Goldsmith was an excitable Irishman of genius, who tumbled out whatever came uppermost, and revealed the feelings of the moment with an utter want of reserve. His self-controlled companions wondered, ridiculed, misinterpreted, and made fewer hits as well as fewer misses. His anxiety "to get in and shine," made him, according to Johnson, an "unsocial" companion. "Goldsmith," he said, "had not temper enough for the game he played. He staked too much. A man might always get a fall from his inferior in the chances of talk, and Goldsmith felt his wounds too keenly." He had certainly some trials of temper in Johnson's company. "Stay, stay," said a German, stopping him in the full flow of his eloquence, "Toctor Johnson is going to say something." An Eton Master called Graham, who was supping with the two doctors, and had got to the pitch of looking at one person, and talking to another, said, "Doctor, I shall be glad to see *you* at Eton." "I shall be glad to wait on you," said Goldsmith. "No," replied Graham, "'tis not you I mean, Doctor Minor; 'tis Doctor Major there." Poor Goldsmith said afterwards, "Graham is a fellow to make one commit suicide."

Boswell who attributes some of Goldsmith's sayings about Johnson to envy, said with probable truth that Goldsmith had not more envy than others, but only spoke of it more freely. Johnson argued that we must be angry with a man who had so much of an odious quality that he could not keep it to himself, but let it "boil over." The feeling, at any rate, was momentary and totally free from malice; and Goldsmith's criticisms upon Johnson and his idolators seem to have been fair enough. His objection to Boswell's substituting a monarchy for a republic has already been mentioned. At another time he checked Boswell's flow of panegyric by asking, "Is he like Burke, who winds into a subject like a serpent?" To which Boswell replied with charming irrelevance, "Johnson is the Hercules who strangled serpents in his cradle." The last of Goldsmith's hits was suggested by Johnson's shaking his sides with laughter because Goldsmith admired the skill with which the little fishes in the fable were made to talk in character. "Why, Dr. Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think," was the retort, "for if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like whales."

In spite of sundry little sparrings, Johnson fully appreciated Goldsmith's genius. Possibly his authority hastened the spread of public appreciation, as he seemed to claim, whilst repudiating Boswell's too flattering theory that it had materially raised Goldsmith's position. When Reynolds quoted the authority of Fox in favour of the *Traveller*, saying that his friends might suspect that they had been too partial, Johnson replied very truly that the *Traveller* was beyond the need of Fox's praise, and that the partiality of Goldsmith's friends had always been against him. They would hardly give him a hearing. "Goldsmith," he added, "was a man who, whatever he wrote, always did it better than any other man could do." Johnson's settled opinion in fact was that embodied in the famous epitaph with its "nihil tetiget quod non ornavit," and, though dedications are perhaps the only literary product more generally insincere than epitaphs, we may believe that Goldsmith too meant what he said in the dedication of *She Stoops to Conquer*. "It may do me some honour to inform the public that I have lived many years in intimacy with you. It may serve the interests of mankind also to inform them that the greatest wit may be found in a character, without impairing the most unaffected piety."

Though Johnson was thus rich in friendship, two connexions have still to be noticed which had an exceptional bearing upon his fame and happiness. In January, 1765, he made the acquaintance of the Thrales. Mr. Thrale was the proprietor of the brewery which afterwards became that of Barclay and Perkins. He was married in 1763 to a Miss Hester Lynch Salisbury, who has become celebrated from her friendship with Johnson.* She was a woman of great vivacity and independence of character. She had a sensitive and passionate, if not a very tender nature, and enough literary culture to appreciate Johnson's intellectual power, and on occasion to play a very respectable part in conversation. She had far more Latin and English scholarship than fell to the lot of most ladies of her day, and wit enough to preserve her from degenerating like some of the "blues," into that most offensive of beings—a feminine prig. Her marriage had been one of convenience, and her husband's want of sympathy, and jealousy of any interference in business matters, forced her, she says, to take to literature as her sole resource. "No wonder," she adds, "if I loved my books and children." It is, perhaps, more to be wondered at that her children seem to have had a rather subordinate place in her affections. The marriage, however, though not of the happiest, was perfectly decorous. Mrs. Thrale discharged her domestic duties irreproachably, even when she seems to have had some real cause of complaint. To the world she eclipsed her husband, a solid respectable man, whose mind, according to Johnson, struck the hours very regularly, though it did not mark the minutes.

The Thrales were introduced to Johnson by their common friend, Arthur Murphy, an actor and dramatist, who afterwards be-

* Mrs. Thrale was born in 1740 or 1741, probably the latter. Thrale was born in 1724.

came the editor of Johnson's works. One day, when calling upon Johnson, they found him in such a fit of despair that Thrale tried to stop his mouth by placing his hand before it. The pair then joined in begging Johnson to leave his solitary abode, and come to them at their country-house at Streatham. He complied, and for the next sixteen years a room was set apart for him, both at Streatham and in their house in Southwark. He passed a large part of his time with them, and derived from the intimacy most of the comfort of his later years. He treated Mrs. Thrale with a kind of paternal gallantry, her age at the time of their acquaintance being twenty-four, and his fifty-five. He generally called her by the playful name of "my mistress," addressed little poems to her, gave her solid advice, and gradually came to confide to her his miseries and ailments with rather surprising frankness. She flattered and amused him, and soothed his sufferings and did something towards humanising his rugged exterior. There was one little grievance between them which requires notice. Johnson's pet virtue in private life was a rigid regard for truth. He spoke, it was said of him, as if he was always on oath. He would not, for example, allow his servant to use the phrase "not at home," and even in the heat of conversation resisted the temptation to give point to an anecdote. The lively Mrs. Thrale rather fretted against the restraint, and Johnson admonished her in vain. He complained to Boswell that she was willing to have that said of her, which the best of mankind had rather died than have said of them. Boswell, the faithful imitator of his master in this respect, delighted in taking up the parable. "Now, madam, give me leave to catch you in the fact," he said on one occasion: "it was not an old woman, but an old man whom I mentioned, as having told me this," and he recounts his check to the "lively lady" with intense complacency. As may be imagined, Boswell and Mrs. Thrale did not love each other, in spite of the well-meant efforts of the sage to bring about a friendly feeling between his disciples.

It is time to close this list of friends with the inimitable Boswell. James Boswell, born in 1740, was the eldest son of a Whig laird and lord of sessions. He had acquired some English friends at the Scotch universities, among whom must be mentioned Mr. Temple, an English clergyman. Boswell's correspondence with Temple, discovered years after his death by a singular chance, and published in 1857, is, after the Life of Johnson, one of the most curious exhibitions of character in the language. Boswell was intended for the Scotch bar, and studied civil law at Utrecht in the winter of 1762. It was in the following summer that he made Johnson's acquaintance.

Perhaps the fundamental quality in Boswell's character was his intense capacity for enjoyment. He was, as Mr. Carlyle puts it, "gluttonously fond of whatever would yield him a little solacement, were it only of a stomachic character." His love of good living and good drink would have made him a hearty admirer of his countryman, Burns, had Burns been famous in Boswell's youth. Nobody

could have joined with more thorough abandonment in the chorus to the poet's liveliest songs in praise of love and wine. He would have made an excellent fourth when "Willie brewed a peck of malt, and Rab and Allan came to see," and the drinking contest for the Whistle commemorated in another lyric would have excited his keenest interest. He was always delighted when he could get Johnson to discuss the ethics and statistics of drinking. "I am myself," he says, "a lover of wine, therefore curious to hear whatever is remarkable concerning drinking." The remark is *à propos* to a story of Dr. Campbell drinking thirteen bottles of port at a sitting. Lest this should seem incredible, he quotes Johnson's dictum. "Sir, if a man drinks very slowly and lets one glass evaporate before he takes another, I know not how long he may drink." Boswell's faculty for making love was as great as his power of drinking. His letters to Temple record with amusing frankness the vicissitudes of some of his courtships and the versatility of his passions.

Boswell's tastes, however, were by no means limited to sensual or frivolous enjoyments. His appreciation of the bottle was combined with an equally hearty sensibility to more intellectual pleasures. He had not a spark of philosophic or poetic power, but within the ordinary range of such topics as can be discussed at a dinner-party, he had an abundant share of liveliness and intelligence. His palate was as keen for good talk as for good wine. He was an admirable recipient, if not an originator, of shrewd or humorous remarks upon life and manners. What in regard to sensual enjoyment was mere gluttony, appeared in higher matters as an insatiable curiosity. At times this faculty became intolerable to his neighbors. "I will not be baited with what and why," said poor Johnson, one day in desperation. "Why is a cow's tail long? Why is a fox's tail bushy?" "Sir," said Johnson on another occasion, when Boswell was cross-examining a third person about him in his presence. "You have but two subjects, yourself and me. I am sick of both." Boswell, however, was not to be repelled by such a retort as this, or even by ruder rebuffs. Once when discussing the means of getting a friend to leave London, Johnson said in revenge for a previous offence. "Nay, sir, we'll send you to him. If your presence doesn't drive a man out of his house, nothing will." Boswell was "horribly shocked," but he still stuck to his victim like a leech, and pried into the minutest details of his life and manners. He observed with conscientious accuracy that though Johnson abstained from milk one fast-day, he did not reject it when put in his cup. He notes the whistlings and puffings, the trick of saying "too-too-too" of his idol: and it was a proud day when he won a bet by venturing to ask Johnson what he did with certain scraped bits of orange-peel. His curiosity was not satisfied on this occasion; but it would have made him the prince of interviewers in these days. Nothing delighted him so much as rubbing shoulders with any famous or notorious person. He scraped acquaintance with Voltaire, Wesley, Rousseau, and Paoli, as well as

with Mrs. Rudd, a forgotten heroine of the *Newgate Calendar* He was as eager to talk to Hume the sceptic, or Wilkes the demagogue, as to the orthodox Tory, Johnson; and, if repelled, it was from no deficiency in daring. In 1767, he took advantage of his travels in Corsica to introduce himself to Lord Chatham, then Prime Minister. The letter moderately ends by asking, "*Could your lordship find time to honour me now and then with a letter?* I have been told how favourably your lordship has spoken of me. To correspond with a Paoli and with a Chatham is enough to keep a young man ever ardent in the pursuit of virtuous fame." No other young man of the day, we may be sure, would have dared to make such a proposal to the majestic orator.

His absurd vanity, and the greedy craving for notoriety at any cost, would have made Boswell the most offensive of mortals, had not his unfeigned good-humour disarmed enmity. Nobody could help laughing, or be inclined to take offence at his harmless absurdities. Burke said of him that he had so much good-humour naturally, that it was scarcely a virtue. His vanity, in fact, did not generate affectation. Most vain men are vain of qualities which they do not really possess, or possess in a lower degree than they fancy. They are always acting a part, and become touchy from a half-conscious sense of the imposture. But Boswell seems to have had few such illusions. He thoroughly and unfeignedly enjoyed his own peculiarities, and thought his real self much too charming an object to be in need of any disguise. No man, therefore, was ever less embarrassed by any regard for his own dignity. He was as ready to join in a laugh at himself as in a laugh at his neighbours. He reveals his own absurdities to the world at large as frankly as Pepys confided them to a journal in cypher. He tells us how drunk he got one night in Skye, and how he cured his headache with brandy next morning; and what an intolerable fool he made of himself at an evening party in London after a dinner with the Duke of Montrose, and how Johnson in vain did his best to keep him quiet. His motive for the concession is partly the wish to illustrate Johnson's indulgence, and, in the last case, to introduce a copy of apologetic verses to the lady whose guest he had been. He reveals other weaknesses with equal frankness. One day, he says, "I owned to Johnson that I was occasionally troubled with a fit of narrowness." "Why, sir," said he, "so am I. *But I do not tell it.*" Boswell enjoys the joke far too heartily to act upon th advice.

There is nothing, however, which Boswell seems to have enjoyed more heartily than his own good impulses. He looks upon his virtuous resolution with a sort of æsthetic satisfaction, and with the glow of a virtuous man contemplating a promising penitent. Whilst suffering severely from the consequences of imprudent conduct, he gets a letter of virtuous advice from his friend Temple. He instantly sees himself reformed for the rest of his days. "My warm imagination," he says, "looks forward with great complacency on the sobriety, the healthfulness, and worth of my future

life." "Every instance of our doing those things which we ought not to have done, and leaving undone those things which we ought to have done, is attended," as he elsewhere sagely observes, "with more or less of what is truly remorse;" but he seems rather to have enjoyed even the remorse. It is needless to say that the complacency was its own reward, and that the resolution vanished like other more eccentric impulses. Music, he once told Johnson, affected him intensely, producing in his mind "alternate sensations of pathetic dejection, so that I was ready to shed tears, and of daring resolution so that I was inclined to rush into the thickest of the [purely hypothetical] battle." "Sir," replied Johnson, "I should never hear it, if it made me such a fool." Elsewhere he expresses a wish to "fly to the woods," or retire into a desert, a disposition which Johnson checked by one of his habitual gibes at the quantity of easily accessible desert in Scotland. Boswell is equally frank in describing himself in situations more provocative of contempt than even drunkenness in a drawing-room. He tells us how dreadfully frightened he was by a storm at sea in the Hebrides, and how one of his companions, "with a happy readiness," made him lay hold of a rope fastened to the masthead, and told him to pull it when he was ordered. Boswell was thus kept quiet in mind and harmless in body.

This extreme simplicity of character makes poor Boswell lovable in his way. If he sought notoriety, he did not so far mistake his powers as to set up for independent notoriety.* He was content to shine in reflected light: and the affectations with which he is charged seem to have been unconscious imitations of his great idol. Miss Burney traced some likeness even in his dress. In the latter part of the *Life* we meet phrases in which Boswell is evidently aping the true Johnsonian style. So, for example, when somebody distinguishes between "moral" and "physical necessity;" Boswell exclaims, "Alas, sir, they come both to the same thing. You may be as hard bound by chains when covered by leather, as when the iron appears." But he specially emulates the profound melancholy of his hero. He seems to have taken pride in his sufferings from hypochondria; though, in truth, his melancholy diverges from Johnson's by as great a difference as that which divides any two varieties in Jaques's classifications. Boswell's was the melancholy of a man who spends too much, drinks too much, falls in love too often, and is forced to live in the country in dependence upon a stern old parent, when he is longing for a jovial life in London taverns. Still he was excusably vexed when Johnson refused to believe in the reality of his complaints, and showed scant sympathy to his noisy would-be fellow-sufferer. Some of Boswell's freaks were, in fact, very trying. Once he gave up writing letters for a long time, to see whether Johnson would be induced to write first. Johnson be-

* The story is often told how Boswell appeared at the Stratford Jubilee with "Corsica Boswell" in large letters on his hat. The account given apparently by himself is sufficiently amusing, but the statement is not quite fair. Boswell not unnaturally appeared at a masquerade in the dress of a Corsican chief, and the inscription on his hat seems to have been "Viva la Libertà."

came anxious, though he half-guessed the truth, and in reference to Boswell's confession gave his disciple a piece of his mind. "Remember that all tricks are either knavish or childish, and that it is as foolish to make experiments upon the constancy of a friend as upon the chastity of a wife."

In other ways Boswell was more successful in aping his friend's peculiarities. When in company with Johnson, he became delightfully pious. "My dear sir," he exclaimed once with unrestrained fervour, "I would fain be a good man, and I am very good now. I fear God and honour the king; I wish to do no ill and to be benevolent to all mankind." Boswell hopes, "for the felicity of human nature," that many experience this mood; though Johnson judiciously suggested that he should not trust too much to impressions. In some matters Boswell showed a touch of independence by outvying the Johnsonian prejudices. He was a warm admirer of feudal principles, and especially held to the propriety of entailing property upon heirs male. Johnson had great difficulty in persuading him to yield to his father's wishes, in a settlement of the estate which contravened this theory. But Boswell takes care to declare that his opinion was not shaken. "Yet let me not be thought," he adds, "harsh or unkind to daughters; for my notion is that they should be treated with great affection and tenderness, and always participate of the prosperity of the family." His estimate of female rights is indicated in another phrase. When Mrs. Knowles, the Quaker, expressed a hope that the sexes would be equal in another world, Boswell replied, "That is too ambitious, madam. *We* might as well desire to be equal with the angels." Boswell, again, differed from Johnson—who, in spite of his love of authority, had a righteous hatred for all recognised tyranny—by advocating the slave-trade. To abolish that trade would, he says, be robbery of the masters and cruelty to the African savages. Nay, he declares, to abolish it would be

To shut the gates of mercy on mankind!

Boswell was, according to Johnson, "the best travelling companion in the world." In fact, for such purposes, unfailing good-humour and readiness to make talk at all hazards are high recommendations. "If, sir, you were shut up in a castle and a new-born baby with you, what would you do?" is one of his questions to Johnson,—*à propos* of nothing. That is exquisitely ludicrous, no doubt; but a man capable of preferring such a remark to silence helps at any rate to keep the ball rolling. A more objectionable trick was his habit not only of asking preposterous or indiscreet questions, but of setting people by the ears out of sheer curiosity. The appearance of so queer a satellite excited astonishment among Johnson's friends. "Who is this Scotch cur at Johnson's heels?" asked some one. "He is not a cur, replied Goldsmith; "he is only a bur. Tom Davies flung him at Johnson in sport, and he has the faculty of sticking." The bur stuck till the end of Johnson's life. Boswell visited London whenever he could, and soon

began taking careful notes of Johnson's talk. His appearance when engaged in this task long afterwards, is described by Miss Burney. Boswell, she says, concentrated his whole attention upon his idol, not even answering questions from others. When Johnson spoke, his eyes goggled with eagerness; he leant his ear almost on the Doctor's shoulder; his mouth dropped open to catch every syllable; and he seemed to listen even to Johnson's breathings as though they had some mystical significance. He took every opportunity of edging himself close to Johnson's side even at meal-times, and was sometimes ordered imperiously back to his place like a faithful but over-obtrusive spaniel.

It is hardly surprising that Johnson should have been touched by the fidelity of this queer follower. Boswell, modestly enough, attributes Johnson's easy welcome to his interest in all manifestations of the human mind, and his pleasure in an unmasguised display of its workings. The last pleasure was certainly to be obtained in Boswell's society. [illegible] fact Boswell, though his qualities were too much those of the [illegible] ary "good fellow," was not without virtues, and still less without remarkable talents. He was, to [illegible] appearance, a man of really generous sympathies, and [illegible] able of appreciating proofs of a warm heart and a vigorous [illegible] ing. Foolish, vain, and absurd in every way, he was yet [illegible] ier and more genuine man than many who laughed at him. His singular gifts as an observer could only escape notice from a careless or inexperienced reader. Boswell has a little of the true Shaksperian secret. He lets his characters show themselves without obtruding unnecessary comment. He never misses the point of a story, though he does not ostentatiously call our attention to it. He gives just what is wanted to indicate character, or to explain the full meaning of a repartee. It is not till we compare his reports with those of less skilful hearers, that we can appreciate the skill with which the essence of a conversation is extracted, and the whole scene indicated by a few telling touches. We are tempted to fancy that we have heard the very thing, and rashly infer that Boswell was simply the mechanical transmitter of the good things uttered. Any one who will try to put down the pith of a brilliant conversation within the same space, may soon satisfy himself of the absurdity of such an hypothesis, and will learn to appreciate Boswell's powers not only of memory but artistic representation. Such a feat implies not only admirable quickness of appreciation, but a rare literary faculty. Boswell's accuracy is remarkable; but it is the least part of his merit.

The book which so faithfully reflects the peculiarities of its hero and its author became the first specimen of a new literary type. Johnson himself was a master in one kind of biography; that which sets forth a condensed and vigorous statement of the essentials of a man's life and character. Other biographers had given excellent memoirs of men considered in relation to the chief historical currents of the time. But a full-[illegible] portrait of a man's domestic life with enough picturesque [illegible] to enable us to see him through

the eyes of private friendship did not exist in the language. Boswell's originality and merit may be tested by comparing his book to the ponderous performance of Sir John Hawkins, or to the dreary dissertations, falsely called lives, of which Dugald Stewart's *Life of Robertson* may be taken for a type. The writer is so anxious to be dignified and philosophical that the despairing reader seeks in vain for a single vivid touch, and discovers even the main facts of the hero's life by some indirect allusion. Boswell's example has been more or less followed by innumerable successors; and we owe it in some degree to his example that we have such delightful books as Lockhart's *Life of Scott* or Mr. Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay*. Yet no later biographer has been quite as fortunate in a subject; and Boswell remains as not only the first, but the best of his class.

One special merit implies something like genius. Macaulay has given to the usual compliant which distorts the vision of most biographers the name of *lues Boswelliana*. It is true that Boswell's adoration of his hero is a typical example of the feeling. But that which distinguishes Boswell, and renders the phrase unjust, is that in him adoration never hindered accuracy of portraiture. "I will not make my tiger a cat to please anybody," was his answer to well-meaning entreaties of Hannah More to soften his accounts of Johnson's asperities. He saw instinctively that a man who is worth anything loses far more than he gains by such posthumous flattery. The whole picture is toned down, and the lights are depressed as well as the shadows. The truth is that it is unscientific to consider a man as a bundle of separate good and bad qualities, of which one half may be concealed without injury to the rest. Johnson's fits of bad temper, like Goldsmith's blundering, must be unsparingly revealed by a biographer, because they are in fact expressions of the whole character. It is necessary to take them into account in order really to understand either the merits or the shortcomings. When they are softened or omitted, the whole story becomes an enigma, and we are often tempted to substitute some less creditable explanation of errors for the true one. We should not do justice to Johnson's intense tenderness, if we did not see how often it was masked by an irritability pardonable in itself, and not affecting the deeper springs of action. To bring out the beauty of a character by means of its external oddities is the triumph of a kindly humourist: and Boswell would have acted as absurdly in suppressing Johnson's weaknesses, as Sterne would have done had he made Uncle Toby a perfectly sound and rational person. But to see this required an insight so rare that it is wanting in nearly all the biographers who have followed Boswell's steps, and is the most conclusive proof that Boswell was a man of a higher intellectual capacity than has been generally admitted.

CHAPTER IV.

JOHNSON AS A LITERARY DICTATOR.

WE have now reached the point at which Johnson's life becomes distinctly visible through the eyes of a competent observer. The last twenty years are those which are really familiar to us; and little remains but to give some brief selection of Boswell's anecdotes. The task, however, is a difficult one. It is easy enough to make a selection of the gems of Boswell's narrative; but it is also inevitable that, taken from their setting, they should lose the greatest part of their brilliance. We lose all the quaint semi-conscious touches of character which make the original so fascinating; and Boswell's absurdities become less amusing when we are able to forget for an instant that the perpetrator is also the narrator. The effort, however, must be made; and it will be best to premise a brief statement of the external conditions of the life.

From the time of the pension until his death, Johnson was elevated above the fear of poverty. He had a pleasant refuge at the Thrales', where much of his time was spent; and many friends gathered round him and regarded his utterances with even excessive admiration. He had still frequent periods of profound depression. His diaries reveal an inner life tormented by gloomy forebodings, by remorse for past indolence and futile resolutions of amendment; but he could always escape from himself to a society of friends and admirers. His abandonment of wine seems to have improved his health and diminished the intensity of his melancholy fits. His literary activity, however, nearly ceased. He wrote a few political pamphlets in defence of Government, and after a long period of indolence managed to complete his last conspicuous work—the *Lives of the Poets*, which was published in 1779 and 1781. One other book of some interest appeared in 1775. It was an account of the journey made with Boswell to the Hebribes in 1773. This journey was in fact the chief interruption to the even tenour of his life. He made a tour to Wales with the Thrales in 1774; and spent a month with them in Paris in 1775. For the rest of the period he lived chiefly in London or at Streatham, making occasional trips to Lichfield and Oxford, or paying visits to Taylor, Langton, and one or two other friends. It was, however, in the London which he loved so ardently ("a man," he said once, "who is tired of London is tired of

life"), that he was chiefly conspicuous. There he talked and drank tea illimitably at his friends' houses, or argued and laid down the law to his disciples collected in a tavern instead of Academic groves. Especially he was in all his glory at the Club, which began its meetings in February, 1764, and was afterwards known as the Literary Club. This Club was founded by Sir Joshua Reynolds, "our Romulus," as Johnson called him. The original members were Reynolds, Johnson, Burke, Nugent, Beauclerk, Langton, Goldsmith, Chamier, and Hawkins. They meet weekly at the Turk's Head, in Gerard Street, Soho, at seven o'clock, and the talk generally continued till a late hour. The Club was afterwards increased in numbers, and the weekly supper changed to a fortnightly dinner. It continued to thrive, and election to it came to be as great an honour in certain circles as election to a membership of Parliament. Among the members elected in Johnson's lifetime were Percy of the *Reliques*, Garrick, Sir W. Jones, Boswell, Fox, Steevens, Gibbon, Adam Smith, the Wartons, Sheridan, Dunning, Sir Joseph Banks, Windham, Lord Stowell, Malone, and Dr. Burney. What was best in the conversation at the time was doubtless to be found at its meetings.

Johnson's habitual mode of life is described by Dr. Maxwell, one of Boswell's friends, who made his acquaintance in 1754. Maxwell generally called upon him about twelve, and found him in bed or declaiming over his tea. A levée, chiefly of literary men, surrounded him; and he seemed to be regarded as a kind of oracle to whom every one might resort for advice or instruction. After talking all the morning, he dined at a tavern, staying late and then going to some friend's house for tea, over which he again loitered for a long time. Maxwell is puzzled to know when he could have read or written. The answer seems to be pretty obvious; namely, that after the publication of the *Dictionary* he wrote very little, and that, when he did write, it was generally in a brief spasm of feverish energy. One may understand that Johnson should have frequently reproached himself for his indolence: though he seems to have occasionally comforted himself by thinking that he could do good by talking as well as by writing. He said that a man should have a part of his life to himself: and compared himself to a physician retired to a small town from practice in a great city. Boswell, in spite of this, said that he still wondered that Johnson had not more pleasure in writing than in not writing. "Sir," replied the oracle, "you *may* wonder."

I will now endeavour, with Boswell's guidance, to describe a few of the characteristic scenes which can be fully enjoyed in his pages alone. The first must be the introduction of Boswell to the sage. Boswell had come to London eager for the acquaintance of literary magnates. He already knew Goldsmith, who had inflamed his desire for an introduction to Johnson. Once when Boswell spoke of Levett, one of Johnson's dependents, Goldsmith had said, "he is poor and honest, which is recommendation enough to Johnson." Another time, when Boswell had wondered at Johnson's

kindness to a man of bad character, Goldsmith had replied, "He is now become miserable, and that insures the protection of Johnson." Boswell had hoped for an introduction through the elder Sheridan; but Sheridan never forgot the contemptuous phrase in which Johnson had referred to his fellow-pensioner. Possibly Sheridan had heard of one other Johnsonian remark. "Why, sir," he had said, "Sherry is dull, naturally dull; but it must have taken him a great deal of pains to become what we now see him. Such an excess of stupidity, sir, is not in Nature." At another time he said, "Sheridan cannot bear me; I bring his declamation to a point." "What influence can Mr. Sheridan have upon the language of this great country by his narrow exertions? Sir, it is burning a farthing candle at Dover to show light at Calais." Boswell, however, was acquainted with Davies, an actor turned bookseller, now chiefly remembered by a line in Churchhill's *Rosciad* which is said to have driven him from the stage—

He mouths a sentence as curs mouth a bone.

Boswell was drinking tea with Davies and his wife in their back parlour when Johnson came into the shop. Davies, seeing him through the glass-door, announced his approach to Boswell in the spirit of Horatio addressing Hamlet: "Look, my Lord, it comes!" Davies introduced the young Scotchman, who remembered Johnson's proverbial prejudices. "Don't tell him where I come from!" cried Boswell. "From Scotland," said Davies roguishly. "Mr. Johnson," said Boswell, "I do indeed come from Scotland; but I cannot help it!" "That, sir," was the first of Johnson's many retorts to his worshipper, "is what a great many of your countrymen cannot help."

Poor Boswell was stunned; but he recovered when Johnson observed to Davies, "What do you think of Garrick? He has refused me an order for the play for Miss Williams because he knows the house will be full, and that an order would be worth three shillings." "O, sir," intruded the unlucky Boswell, "I cannot think Mr. Garrick would grudge such a trifle to you." "Sir," replied Johnson sternly, "I have known David Garrick longer than you have done, and I know no right you have to talk to me on the subject." The second blow might have crushed a less intrepid curiosity. Boswell, though silenced, gradually recovered sufficiently to listen, and afterwards to note down parts of the conversation. As the interview went on, he even ventured to make a remark or two, which were very civilly received: Davies consoled him at his departure by assuring him that the great man liked him very well. "I cannot conceive a more humiliating position," said Beauclerk on another occasion, "than to be clapped on the back by Tom Davies." For the present, however, even Tom Davies was a welcome encourager to one who, for the rest, was not easily rebuffed. A few days afterwards Boswell ventured a call, was kindly received and detained for some time by "the giant in his

den." He was still a little afraid of the said giant, who had shortly before administered a vigorous retort to his countryman Blair. Blair had asked Johnson whether he thought that any man of a modern age could have written *Ossian.* "Yes, sir," replied Johnson, "many men, many women, and many children." Boswell, however, got on very well, and before long had the high honour of drinking a bottle of port with Johnson at the Mitre, and receiving, after a little autobiographical sketch, the emphatic approval, "Give me your hand, I have taken a liking to you."

In a very short time Boswell was on sufficiently easy terms with Johnson, not merely to frequent his levées but to ask him to dinner at the Mitre. He gathered up, though without the skill of his later performances, some fragments of the conversational feast. The great man aimed another blow or two at Scotch prejudices. To an unlucky compatriot of Boswell's, who claimed for his country a great many "noble wild prospects," Johnson replied, "I believe, sir, you have a great many, Norway, too, has noble wild prospects; and Lapland is remarkable for prodigious noble wild prospects. But, sir, let me tell you the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England." Though Boswell makes a slight remonstrance about the "rude grandeur of Nature" as seen in "Caledonia," he sympathized in this with his teacher. Johnson said afterwards, that he never knew any one with "such a gust for London." Before long he was trying Boswell's tastes by asking him in Greenwich Park, "Is not this very fine?" "Yes, sir," replied the promising disciple, "but not equal to Fleet Street." "You are right, sir," said the sage; and Boswell illustrates his dictum by the authority of a "very fashionable baronet," and, moreover, a baronet from Rydal, who declared that the fragrance of a May evening in the country might be very well, but that he preferred the smell of a flambeau at the playhouse. In mere serious moods Johnson delighted his new disciple by discussions upon theological, social, and literary topics. He argued with an unfortunate friend of Boswell's, whose mind, it appears, had been poisoned by Hume, and who was, moreover, rash enough to undertake the defence of principles of political equality. Johnson's view of all propagators of new opinions was tolerably simple. "Hume, and other sceptical innovators," he said, "are vain men, and will gratify themselves at any expense. Truth will not afford sufficient food to their vanity; so they have betaken themselves to error. Truth, sir, is a cow which will yield such people no more milk, and so they are gone to milk the bull." On another occasion poor Boswell, not yet acquainted with the master's prejudices, quoted with hearty laughter a "very strange" story which Hume had told him of Johnson. According to Hume, Johnson had said that he would stand before a battery of cannon to restore Convocation to its full powers. "And would I not, sir?" thundered out the sage with flashing eyes and threatening gestures. Boswell judiciously bowed to the storm, and diverted Johnson's attention. Another manifestation of orthodox prejudice was less terrible.

Boswell told Johnson that he had heard a Quaker woman preach. "A woman's preaching," said Johnson, "is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

So friendly had the pair become, that when Boswell left England to continue his studies at Utrecht, Johnson accompanied him in the stage-coach to Harwich, amusing him on the way by his frankness of address to fellow-passengers, and by the voracity of his appetite. He gave him some excellent advice, remarking of a moth which fluttered into a candle, "that creature was its own tormentor, and I believe its name was Boswell." He refuted Berkeley by striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it. As the ship put out to sea Boswell watched him from the deck, whilst he remained "rolling his majestic frame in his usual manner." And so the friendship was cemented, though Boswell disappeared for a time from the scene, travelled on the Continent, and visited Paoli in Corsica. A friendly letter or two kept up the connexion till Boswell returned in 1766, with his head full of Corsica and a projected book of travels.

In the next year, 1767, occurred an incident upon which Boswell dwells with extreme complacency. Johnson was in the habit of sometimes reading in the King's Library, and it came into the head of his majesty that he should like to see the uncouth monster upon whom he had bestowed a pension. In spite of his semi-humorous Jacobitism, there was probably not a more loyal subject in his majesty's dominions. Loyalty is a word too often used to designate a sentiment worthy only of valets, advertising tradesmen, and writers of claptrap articles. But it deserves all respect when it reposes, as in Johnson's case, upon a profound conviction of the value of political subordination, and an acceptance of the king as the authorised representative of a great principle. There was no touch of servility in Johnson's respect for his sovereign, a respect fully reconcilable with a sense of his own personal dignity. Johnson spoke of his interview with an unfeigned satisfaction, which it would be difficult in these days to preserve from the taint of snobbishness. He described it frequently to his friends, and Boswell with pious care ascertained the details from Johnson himself, and from various secondary sources. He contrived afterwards to get his minute submitted to the King himself, who graciously authorised its publication. When he was preparing his biography, he published this account with the letter to Chesterfield in a small pamphlet sold at a prohibitory price, in order to secure the copyright.

"I find," said Johnson afterwards, "that it does a man good to be talked to by his sovereign. In the first place, a man cannot be in a passion." What other advantages he perceived must be unknown, for here the oracle was interrupted. But whatever the advantages, it could hardly be reckoned amongst them, that there would be room for the hearty cut and thrust retorts which enlivened his ordinary talk. To us accordingly the conversation is chiefly

interesting as illustrating what Johnson meant by his politeness. He found that the King wanted him to talk, and he talked accordingly. He spoke in a "firm manly manner, with a sonorous voice," and not in the subdued tone customary at formal receptions. He dilated upon various literary topics, on the libraries of Oxford and Cambridge, on some contemporary controversies, on the quack Dr. Hill, and upon the reviews of the day. All that is worth repeating is a complimentary passage which shows Johnson's possession of that courtesy which rests upon sense and self-respect. The King asked whether he was writing anything, and Johnson excused himself by saying that he had told the world what he knew for the present, and had "done his part as a writer." "I should have thought so too," said the King, "if you had not written so well." "No man," said Johnson, "could have paid a higher compliment; and it was fit for a King to pay—it was decisive." When asked if he had replied, he said, "No, sir. When the King had said it, it was to be. It was not for me to bandy civilities with my sovereign." Johnson was not the less delighted. "Sir," he said to the librarian, "they may talk of the King as they will, but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen." And he afterwards compared his manners to those of Louis XIV., and his favourite, Charles II. Goldsmith, says Boswell, was silent during the narrative, because (so his kind friend supposed) he was jealous of the honour paid to the dictator. But his natural simplicity prevailed. He ran to Johnson, and exclaimed in 'a kind of flutter,' "Well, you acquitted yourself in this conversation better than I should have done, for I should have bowed and stammered through the whole of it."

The years 1768 and 1769 were a period of great excitement for Boswell. He was carrying on various love affairs, which ended with his marriage in the end of 1769. He was publishing his book upon Corsica and paying homage to Paoli, who arrived in England in the autumn of the same year. The book appeared in the beginning of 1768, and he begs his friend Temple to report all that is said about it, but with the restriction that he is to conceal *all censure*. He particularly wanted Gray's opinion, as Gray was a friend of Temple's. Gray's opinion, not conveyed to Boswell, was expressed by his calling it "a dialogue between a green goose and a hero." Boswell, who was cultivating the society of various eminent people, exclaims triumphantly in a letter to Temple (April 26, 1768). "I am really the great man now." Johnson and Hume had called upon him on the same day, and Garrick, Franklin, and Oglethorpe also partook of his "admirable dinners and good claret." "This," he says, with the sense that he deserved his honours, "is enjoying the fruit of my labours, and appearing like the friend of Paoli." Johnson in vain expressed a wish that he would "empty his head of Corsica, which had filled it too long." "Empty my head of Corsica! Empty it of honour, empty it of friendship, empty it of piety!" exclaims the ardent youth. The next year accordingly saw Boswell's appearance at the Stratford Jubilee, where he pa-

raded to the admiration of all beholders in a costume described by himself (apparently) in a glowing article in the *London Magazine.* "Is it wrong, sir," he took speedy opportunity of inquiring from the oracle, "to affect singularity in order to make people stare?" "Yes," replied Johnson, "if you do it by propagating error, and indeed it is wrong in any way. There is in human nature a general inclination to make people stare, and every wise man has himself to cure of it, and does cure himself. If you wish to make people stare by doing better than others, why make them stare till they stare their eyes out. But consider how easy it is to make people stare by being absurd"—a proposition which he proceeds to illustrate by examples perhaps less telling than Boswell's recent performance.

The sage was less communicative on the question of marriage, though Boswell had anticipated some "instructive conversation" upon that topic. His sole remark was one from which Boswell "humbly differed." Johnson maintained that a wife was not the worse for being learned. Boswell, on the other hand, defined the proper degree of intelligence to be desired in a female companion by some verses in which Sir Thomas Overbury says that a wife should have some knowledge, and be "by nature wise, not learned much by art." Johnson said afterwards that Mrs. Boswell was in a proper degree inferior to her husband. So far as we can tell, she seems to have been a really sensible and good woman, who kept her husband's absurdities in check, and was, in her way, a better wife than he deserved. So, happily, are most wives.

Johnson and Boswell had several meetings in 1769. Boswell had the honour of introducing the two objects of his idolatry, Johnson and Paoli, and on another occasion entertained a party including Goldsmith and Garrick and Reynolds, at his lodgings in Old Bond Street. We can still see the meeting more distinctly than many that have been swallowed by a few days of oblivion. They waited for one of the party, Johnson kindly maintaining that six ought to be kept waiting for one, if the one would suffer more by the others sitting down than the six by waiting. Meanwhile Garrick "played round Johnson with a fond vivacity, taking hold of the breasts of his coat, looking up in his face with a lively archness," and complimenting him on his good health. Goldsmith strutted about bragging of his dress, of which Boswell, in the serene consciousness of superiority to such weakness, thought him seriously vain. "Let me tell you," said Goldsmith, "when my tailor brought home my bloom-coloured coat, he said, 'Sir, I have a favour to beg of you; when anybody asks you who made your clothes, be pleased to mention John Filby, at the Harrow, Water Lane.'" "Why, sir," said Johnson, "that was because he knew that the strange colour would attract crowds to gaze at it, and thus they might hear of him, and see how well he could make a coat even of so absurd a colour." Mr. Filby has gone the way of all tailors and bloom-coloured coats, but some of his bills are preserved. On the day of this dinner he had delivered to Goldsmith

a half-dress suit of ratteen lined with satin, costing twelve guineas, a pair of silk stocking-breeches for £2 5*s.* and a pair of bloom-coloured ditto for £1 4*s.* 6*d.* The bill, including other items, was paid, it is satisfactory to add, in February, 1771.

The conversation was chiefly literary. Johnson repeated the concluding lines of the *Dunciad;* upon which some one (probably Boswell) ventured to say that they were "too fine for such a poem—a poem on what?" "Why," said Johnson, "on dunces! It was worth while being a dunce then. Ah, sir, hadst *thou* lived in those days!" Johnson previously uttered a criticism which has led some people to think that he had a touch of the dunce in him. He declared that a description of a temple in Congreve's *Mourning Bride* was the finest he knew—finer than anything in Shakspeare. Garrick vainly protested; but Johnson was inexorable. He compared Congreve to a man who had only ten guineas in the world, but all in one coin; whereas Shakspeare might have ten thousand separate guineas. The principle of the criticism is rather curious. "What I mean is," said Johnson, "that you can show me no passage where there is slmply a description of material objects, without any admixture of moral notions, which producos such an effect." The description of the night before Agincourt was rejected because there were men in it; and the description of Dover Cliff because the boats and the crows "impede yon fall." They do "not impress your mind at once with the horrible idea of immense height. The impression is divided; you pass on by computation from one stage of the tremendous space to another."

Probably most people will think that the passage in question deserves a very slight fraction of the praise bestowed upon it; but the criticism, like most of Johnson's, has a meaning which might be worth examining abstractedly from the special application which shocks the idolaters of Shakspeare. Presently the party discussed Mrs. Montagu, whose Essay upon Shakspeare had made some noise. Johnson had a respect for her, caused in great measure by a sense of her liberality to his friend Miss Williams, of whom more must be said hereafter. He paid her some tremendous compliments, observing that some China plates which had belonged to Queen Elizabeth and to her, had no reason to be ashamed of a possessor so little inferior to the first. But he had his usual professional contempt for her amateur performances in literature. Her defence of Shakspeare against Voltaire did her honour, he admitted, but it would do nobody else honour. "No, sir, there is no real criticism in it: none showing the beauty of thought, as formed on the workings of the human heart." Mrs. Montagu was reported once to have complimented a modern tragedian, probably Jephson, by saying, "I tremble for Shakspeare." "When Shakspeare," said Johnson, "has got Jephson for his rival and Mrs. Montagu for his defender, he is in a poor state indeed." The conversation went on to a recently published book, *Kames's Elements of Criticism*, which Johnson praised, whilst Goldsmith said more truly, "It is easier to write that book than to read it." Johnson went on to

speak of other critics. "There is no great merit," he said "in telling how many plays have ghosts in them, and how this ghost is better than that. You must show how terror is impressed on the human heart. In the description of night in *Macbeth* the beetle and the bat detract from the general idea of darkness—inspissated gloom."

After Boswell's marriage he disappeared for some time from London, and his correspondence with Johnson dropped, as he says, without coldness, from pure procrastination. He did not return to London till 1772. In the spring of that and the following year he renewed his old habits of intimacy, and inquired into Johnson's opinion upon various subjects ranging from ghosts to literary criticism. The height to which he had risen in the doctor's good opinion was marked by several symptoms. He was asked to dine at Johnson's house upon Easter day, 1773; and observes that his curiosity was as much gratified as by a previous dinner with Rousseau in the "wilds of Neufchatel." He was now able to report, to the amazement of many inquirers, that Johnson's establishment was quite orderly. The meal consisted of very good soup, a boiled leg of lamb with spinach, a veal pie, and a rice pudding. A stronger testimony of good-will was his election, by Johnson's influence, into the Club. It ought apparently to be said that Johnson forced him upon the Club by letting it be understood that, till Boswell was admitted, no other candidate would have a chance. Boswell, however, was, as his proposer said, a thoroughly "clubable" man, and once a member, his good humor secured his popularity. On the important evening Boswell dined at Beauclerk's with his proposer and some other members. The talk turned upon Goldsmith's merits; and Johnson not only defended his poetry, but preferred him as a historian to Robertson. Such a judgment could be explained in Boswell's opinion by nothing but Johnson's dislike to the Scotch. Once before, when Boswell had mentioned Robertson in order to meet Johnson's condemnation of Scotch literature in general, Johnson had evaded him; "Sir, I love Robertson, and I won't talk of his book." On the present occasion he said that he would give to Robertson the advise offered by an old college tutor to a pupil; "read over your compositions, and whenever you meet with a passage which you think particularly fine, strike it out." A good anecdote of Goldsmith followed. Johnson had said to him once in the Poet's Corner at Westminster,—

Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur istis.

When they got to Temple Bar Goldsmith pointed to the heads of the Jacobites upon it and slily suggested,—

Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur *istis*.

Johnson next pronounced a critical Judgment which should be set against many sins of that kind. He praised the Pilgrim's Pro-

gress very warmly, and suggested that Bunyan had probably read Spenser.

After more talk the gentlemen went to the Club; and poor Boswell remained trembling with an anxiety which even the charms of Lady Di Beauclerk's conversation could not dissipate. The welcome news of his election was brought; and Boswell went to see Burke for the first time, and to receive a humorous charge from Johnson, pointing out the conduct expected from him as a good member. Perhaps some hints were given as to betrayal of confidence. Boswell seems at any rate to have had a certain reserve in repeating Club talk.

This intimacy with Johnson was about to receive a more public and even more impressive stamp. The antipathy to Scotland and the Scotch already noticed was one of Johnson's most notorious crotchets. The origin of the prejudice was forgotten by Johnson himself, though he was willing to accept a theory started by old Sheridan that it was resentment for the betrayal of Charles I. There is, however, nothing surprising in Johnson's partaking a prejudice common enough from the days of his youth, when each people supposed itself to have been cheated by the Union, and Englishmen resented the advent of swarms of needy adventurers, talking with a strange accent and hanging together with honourable but vexatious persistence. Johnson was irritated by what was, after all, a natural defence against English prejudice. He declared that the Scotch were always ready to lie on each other's behalf. "The Irish," he said, "are not in a conspiracy to cheat the world by false representations of the merits of their countrymen. No, sir, the Irish are a fair people; they never speak well of one another." There was another difference. He always expressed a generous resentment against the tyranny exercised by English rulers over the Irish people. To some one who defended the restriction of Irish trade for the good of English merchants, he said, "Sir, you talk the language of a savage. What! sir, would you prevent any people from feeding themselves, if by any honest means they can do it?" It was "better to hang or drown people at once," than weaken them by unrelenting persecution. He felt some tenderness for Catholics, especially when oppressed, and a hearty antipathy towards prosperous Presbyterians. The Lowland Scotch were typified by John Knox, in regard to whom he expressed a hope, after viewing the ruins of St. Andrew's, that he was buried "in the highway."

This sturdy British and High Church prejudice did not prevent the worthy doctor from having many warm friendships with Scotchmen, and helping many distressed Scotchmen in London. Most of the amanuenses employed for his *Dictionary* were Scotch. But he nourished the prejudice the more as giving an excellent pretext for many keen gibes. "Scotch learning," he said, for example, "is like bread in a besieged town. Every man gets a mouthful, but no man a bellyful." Once Strahan said in answer to some abusive remarks, "Well, sir, God made Scotland." "Certainly,'

replied Johnson, "but we must always remember that He made it for Scotchmen; and comparisons are odious, Mr. Strahan, but God made hell."

Boswell, therefore, had reason to feel both triumph and alarm when he induced the great man to accompany him in a Scotch tour. Boswell's journal of the tour appeared soon after Johnson's death. Johnson himself wrote an account of it, which is not without interest, though it is in his dignified style, which does not condescend to Boswellian touches of character. In 1773 the Scotch Highlands were still a little known region, justifying a book descriptive of manners and customs, and touching upon antiquities now the commonplaces of innumerable guide books. Scott was still an infant, and the day of enthusiasm, real or affected, for mountain scenery had not yet dawned. Neither of the travellers, as Boswell remarks, cared much for "rural beauties." Johnson says quaintly on the shores of Loch Ness, "It will very readily occur that this uniformity of barrenness can afford very little amusement to the traveller; that it is easy to sit at home and conceive rocks and heath and waterfalls; and that these journeys are useless labours, which neither impregnate the imagination nor enlarge the understanding." And though he shortly afterwards sits down on a bank "such as a writer of romance might have delighted to feign," and there conceived the thought of his book, he does not seem to have felt much enthusiasm. He checked Boswell for describing a hill as "immense," and told him that it was only a "considerable protuberance." Indeed it is not surprising if he sometimes grew weary in long rides upon Highland ponies, or if, when weatherbound in a remote village in Skye, he declared that this was a "waste of life."

On the whole, however, Johnson bore his fatigues well, preserved his temper, and made sensible remarks upon men and things. The pair started from Edinburgh in the middle of August, 1773; they went north along the eastern coast, through St. Andrew's, Aberdeen, Banff, Fort George, and Inverness. There they took to horses, rode to Glenelg, and took boat for Skye, where they landed on the 2nd of September. They visited Rothsay, Col, Mull, and Iona, and after some dangerous sailing got to the mainland at Oban on October 2nd. Thence they proceeded by Inverary and Loch Lomond to Glasgow: and after paying a visit to Boswell's paternal mansion at Auchinleck in Ayrshire, returned to Edinburgh in November. It were too long to narrate their adventures at length, or to describe in detail how Johnson grieved over traces of the iconoclastic zeal of Knox's disciples, seriously investigated stories of second-sight, cross-examined and brow-beat credulous believers in the authenticity of *Ossian*, and felt his piety grow warm among the ruins of Iona. Once or twice, when the temper of the travellers was tried by the various worries incident to their position, poor Boswell came in for some severe blows. But he was happy, feeling, as he remarks, like a dog who has run away with a large piece of meat, and is devouring it peacefully in a corner by himself.

Boswell's spirits were irrepressible. On hearing a drum beat for dinner at Fort George, he says, with a Pepys-like touch, "I for a little while fancied myself a military man, and it pleased me." He got scandalously drunk on one occasion, and showed reprehensible levity on others. He bored Johnson by inquiring too curiously into his reasons for not wearing a nightcap—a subject which seems to have interested him profoundly; he permitted himself to say in his journal that he was so much pleased with some pretty ladies' maids at the Duke of Argyll's, that he felt he could "have been a knight-errant for them," and his "venerable fellow-traveller" read the passage without censuring his levity. The great man himself could be equally volatile. "I *have often thought*," he observed one day, to Boswell's amusement, "that if I kept a seraglio, the ladies should all wear linen gowns"—as more cleanly. The pair agreed in trying to stimulate the feudal zeal of various Highland chiefs with whom they came in contact, and who were unreasonable enough to show a hankering after the luxuries of civilisation.

Though Johnson seems to have been generally on his best behaviour, he had a rough encounter or two with some of the more civilised natives. Boswell piloted him safely through a visit to Lord Monboddo, a man of real ability, though the proprietor of crochets as eccentric as Johnson's, and consequently divided from him by strong mutual prejudices. At Auchinleck he was less fortunate. The old laird, who was the staunchest of Whigs, had not relished his son's hero-worship. "There is nae hope for Jamie. mon: Jamie is gaen clean gyte. What do you think, mon? He's gone wi' Paoli—he's off wi' the land-louping scoundrel of a Corsican, and who's tail do you think he's pinned himself to now, mon?" "Here," says Sir Walter Scott, the authority for the story, "the old judge summoned up a sneer of most sovereign contempt. 'A dominie, mon—an auld dominie—he keeped a schule and caauld it an acaademy.'" The two managed to keep the peace till, one day during Johnson's visit, they got upon Oliver Cromwell. Boswell suppresses the scene with obvious reluctance, his openness being checked for once by filial respect. Scott has fortunately preserved the climax of Old Boswell's argument. "What had Cromwell done for his country?" asked Johnson. "God, doctor, he gart Kings ken that they had a *lith* in their necks" retorted the laird, in a phrase worthy of Mr. Carlyle himself. Scott reports one other scene, at which respectable commentators, like Croker, hold up their hands in horror. Should we regret or rejoice to say that it involves an obvious inaccuracy? The authority, however, is too good to allow us to suppose that it was without some foundation. Adam Smith, it is said, met Johnson at Glasgow and had an altercation with him about the well-known account of Hume's death. As Hume did not die till three years later, there must be some error in this. The dispute, however, whatever its date or subject, ended by Johnson saying to Smith, "*You lie.*" "And what did you reply?" was asked of Smith. "I said 'you are a son of a ——.'" "On such terms," says Scott, "did these two great moralists meet

and part, and such was the classical dialogue between these two great teachers of morality."

In the year 1774 Boswell found it expedient to atone for his long absence in the previous year by staying at home. Johnson managed to complete his account of the *Scotch Tour*, which was published at the end of the year. Among other consequences was a violent controversy with the lovers of *Ossian*. Johnson was a thorough sceptic as to the authenticity of the book. His scepticism did not repose upon the philological or antiquarian reasonings, which would be applicable in the controversy from internal evidence. It was to some extent the expression of a general incredulity which astonished his friends, especially when contrasted with his tenderness for many puerile superstitions. He could scarcely be induced to admit the truth of any narrative which struck him as odd, and it was long, for example, before he would believe even in the Lisbon earthquake. Yet he seriously discussed the truth of second-sight; he carefully investigated the Cock-lane ghost—a goblin who anticipated some of the modern phenomena of so-called "spiritualism," and with almost equal absurdity; he told stories to Boswell about a "shadowy being" which had once been seen by Cave, and declared that he had once heard his mother call "Sam" when he was at Oxford and she at Lichfield. The apparent inconsistency was in truth natural enough. Any man who clings with unreasonable pertinacity to the prejudices of his childhood, must be alternately credulous and sceptical in excess. In both cases, he judges by his fancies in defiance of evidence; and accepts and rejects according to his likes and dislikes, instead of his estimates of logical proof, *Ossian* would be naturally offensive to Johnson, as one of the earliest and most remarkable manifestations of that growing taste for what was called "Nature," as opposed to civilisation, of which Rousseau was the great mouthpiece. Nobody more heartily despised this form of "cant" than Johnson. A man who utterly despised the scenery of the Hebrides as compared with Greenwich Park or Charing Cross, would hardly take kindly to the Ossianesque version of the mountain passion. The book struck him as sheer rubbish. I have already quoted the retort about "many men, many women, and many children." "A man," he said, on another occasion, "might write such stuff for ever, if he would abandon his mind to it."

The precise point, however, upon which he rested his case, was the tangible one of the inability of Macpherson to produce the manuscripts of which he had affirmed the existence. Macpherson wrote a furious letter to Johnson, of which the purport can only be inferred from Johnson's smashing retort,—

"Mr. James MacPherson, I have received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat by the menaces of a ruffian.

"What would you have me retract? I thought your book an

imposture: I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your *Homer*, are not so formidable; and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

"SAM. JOHNSON."

And so laying in a tremendous cudgel, the old gentleman (he was now sixty-six) awaited the assault, which, however, was not delivered.

In 1775 Boswell again came to London, and renewed some of the Scotch discussions. He attended a meeting of the Literary Club, and found the members disposed to laugh at Johnson's tenderness to the stories about second-sight. Boswell heroically avowed his own belief. "The evidence," he said, "is enough for me, though not for his great mind. What will not fill a quart bottle, will fill a pint bottle. I am filled with belief." "Are you?" said Colman; "then cork it up."

It was during this and the next few years that Boswell laboured most successfully in gathering materials for his book. In 1777 he only met Johnson in the country. In 1779, for some unexplained reason, he was lazy in making notes; in 1780 and 1781 he was absent from London; and in the following year, Johnson was visibly declining. The tenour of Johnson's life was interrupted during this period by no remarkable incidents, and his literary activity was not great, although the composition of the *Lives of the Poets* falls between 1777 and 1780. His mind, however, as represented by his talk, was in full vigour. I will take in order of time a few of the passages recorded by Boswell, which may serve for various reasons to afford the best illustration of his character. Yet it may be worth while once more to repeat the warning that such fragments moved from their context must lose most of their charm.

On March 26th (1775), Boswell met Johnson at the house of the publisher, Strahan. Strahan reminded Johnson of a characteristic remark which he had formerly made, that there are "few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money." On another occasion Johnson observed with equal truth, if less originality, that cultivating kindness was an important part of life, as well as money-making. Johnson then asked to see a country lad whom he had recommended to Strahan as an apprentice. He asked for five guineas on account, that he might give one to the boy. "Nay, if a man recommends a boy and does nothing for him, it is sad work." A "little, thick short-legged boy" was accordingly brought into the courtyard, whither Johnson and Boswell descended, and the lexicographer bending himself down administered some good advice to the awe-struck lad with "slow and sonorous solemnity," ending by the presentation of the guinea

In the evening the pair formed part of a corps of party "wits," led by Sir Joshua Reynolds, to the benefit of Mrs. Abington, who

had been a frequent model of the painter. Johnson praised Garrick's prologues, and Boswell kindly reported the eulogy to Garrick, with whom he supped at Beauclerk's. Garrick treated him to a mimicry of Johnson, repeating "with pauses and half-whistling," the lines,—

> Os homini sublime dedit—cœlumque tueri
> Jussit—et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus :

looking downwards, and at the end touching the ground with a contorted gesticulation. Garrick was generally jealous of Johnson's light opinion of him, and used to take off his old master, saying, "Davy has some convivial pleasantry about him, but 'tis a futile fellow."

Next day, at Thrales', Johnson fell foul of Gray, one of his pet aversions. Boswell denied that Gray was dull in poetry. "Sir," replied Johnson, "he was dull in company, dull in his closet, dull everywhere. He was dull in a new way, and that made people think him great. He was a mechanical poet." He proceeded to say that there were only two good stanzas in the *Elegy*. Johnson's criticism was perverse ; but if we were to collect a few of the judgments passed by contemporaries upon each other, it would be scarcely exceptional in its want of appreciation. It is rather odd to remark that Gray was generally condemned for obscurity—a charge which seems strangely out of place when he is measured by more recent standards.

A day or two afterwards some one rallied Johnson on his appearance at Mrs. Abington's benefit. "Why did you go?" he asked. "Did you see?" "No, sir." "Did you hear?" "No, sir." "Why, then, sir, did you go?" "Because, sir, she is a favourite of the public ; and when the public cares the thousandth part for you that it does for her, I will go to your benefit too."

The day after, Boswell won a bet from Lady Di Beauclerk by venturing to ask Johnson what he did with the orange-peel which he used to pocket. Johnson received the question amicably, but did not clear the mystery. "Then," said Boswell, "the world must be left in the dark. It must be said, he scraped them, and he let them dry, but what he did with them next he never could be prevailed upon to tell." "Nay, sir," replied Johnson, "you should say it more emphatically—he could not be prevailed upon, even by his dearest friends to tell."

This year Johnson received the degree of LL.D. from Oxford. He had previously (in 1765) received the same honour from Dublin. It is remarkable, however, that familiar as the title has become, Johnson called himself plain Mr. to the end of his days, and was generally so called by his intimates. On April 2nd, at a dinner at Hoole's, Johnson made another assault upon Gray and Mason. When Boswell said that there were good passages in Mason's *Elfrida*, he conceded that there were "now and then some good imitations of Milton's bad manner." After some more talk, Boswell

spoke of the cheerfulness of Fleet Street. "Why, sir," said Johnson, "Fleet Street has a very animated appearance, but I think that the full tide of human existence is at Charing Cross," He added a story of an eminent tallow-chandler who had made a fortune in London, and was foolish enough to retire to the country. He grew so tired of his retreat, that he begged to know the melting-days of his successor, that he might be present at the operation.

On April 7th, they dined at a tavern, where the talk turned upon *Ossian.* Some one mentioned as an objection to its authenticity that no mention of wolves occurred in it. Johnson fell into a reverie upon wild beasts, and, whilst Reynolds and Langton were discussing something, he broke out, "Pennant tells of bears." What Pennant told is unknown. The company continued to talk whilst Johnson continued his monologue, the word "bear" occurring at intervals, like a word in a catch. At last, when a pause came, he was going on: "We are told that the black bear is innocent, but I should not like to trust myself with him." Gibbon muttered in a low tone, "I should not like to trust myself with *you*"—a prudent resolution, says honest Boswell who hated Gibbon, if it referred to a competition of abilities.

The talk went on to patriotism, and Johnson laid down an apophthegm, at "which many will start," many people, in fact, having little sense of humour. Such persons may be reminded for their comfort that at this period patriot had a technical meaning. "Patriotism is the past refuge of a scoundrel." On the 10th of April he laid down another dogma, calculated to offend the weaker brethren. He defended Pope's line—

Man never *is* but always *to be* blest.

And being asked if man did not sometimes enjoy a momentary happiness, replied, "Never, but when he is drunk." It would be useless to defend these and other such utterances to any one who cannot enjoy them without defence.

On April 11th, the pair went in Reynolds's coach to dine with Cambridge, at Twickenham. Johnson was in high spirits. He remarked as they drove down, upon the rarity of good humour in life. One friend mentioned by Boswell was, he said, *acid*, and another *muddy*. At last, stretching himself and turning with complacency, he observed, "I look upon myself as a good-humoured fellow"—a bit of self-esteem against which Boswell protested. Johnson, he admitted, was good-natured; but was too irascible and impatient to be good-humoured. On reaching Cambridge's house, Johnson ran to look at the books. "Mr. Johnson," said Cambridge politely, "I am going with your pardon to accuse myself, for I have the same custom which I perceive you have. But it seems odd that one should have such a desire to look at the backs of books." "Sir," replied Johnson, wheeling about at the words, "the reason is very plain. Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find infor-

mation upon it. When we inquire into any subject, the first thing we have to do is to know what books have treated of it. This leads us to look at catalogues, and the backs of books in libraries."

A pleasant talk followed. Johnson denied the value attributed to historical reading, on the ground that we know very little except a few facts and dates. All the colouring, he said, was conjectural. Boswell chuckles over the reflection that Gibbon, who was present, did not take up the cudgels for his favourite study, though the first-fruits of his labours were to appear in the following year. "Probably he did not like to trust himself with Johnson."

The conversation presently turned upon the *Beggar's Opera*, and Johnson sensibly refused to believe that any man had been made a rogue by seeing it. Yet the moralist felt bound to utter some condemnation of such a performance, and at last, amidst the smothered amusement of the company, collected himself to give a heavy stroke: "there is in it," he said, "such a *labefactation* of all principles as may be dangerous to morality."

A discussion followed as to whether Sheridan was right for refusing to allow his wife to continue as a public singer. Johnson defended him "with all the high spirit of a Roman senator." "He resolved wisely and nobly, to be sure. He is a brave man. Would not a gentleman be disgraced by having his wife sing publicly for hire? No, sir, there can be no doubt here. I know not if I should not prepare myself for a public singer as readily as let my wife be one."

The stout old supporter of social authority went on to denounce the politics of the day. He asserted that politics had come to mean nothing but the art of rising in the world. He contrasted the absence of any principles with the state of the national mind during the stormy days of the seventeenth century. This gives the pith of Johnston's political prejudices. He hated Whigs blindly from his cradle; but he justified his hatred on the ground that they were now all "bottomless Whigs," that is to say, that pierce where you would, you came upon no definite creed, but only upon hollow formulæ, intended as a cloak for private interest. If Burke and one or two of his friends be excepted, the remark had but too much justice.

In 1776, Boswell found Johnson rejoicing in the prospect of a journey to Italy with the Thrales. Before starting he was to take a trip to the country, in which Boswell agreed to join. Boswell gathered up various bits of advice before their departure. One seems to have commended itself to him as specially available for practice. "A man who had been drinking freely," said the moralist. "should never go into a new company. He would probably strike them as ridiculous, though he might be in unison with those who had been drinking with him." Johnson propounded another favourite theory. "A ship," he said, "was worse than a gaol. There is in a gaol better air, better company, better conveniency of every kind; and a ship has the additional disadvantage of being in danger."

On March 19th, they went by coach to the Angel at Oxford;

and next morning visited the Master of University College, who chose with Boswell to act in opposition to a very sound bit of advice given by Johnson soon afterwards — perhaps with some reference to the proceeding. "Never speak of a man in his own presence; it is always indelicate and may be offensive." The two however, discussed Johnson without reserve. The Master said that he would have given Johnson a hundred pounds for a discourse on the British Constitution; and Boswell suggested that Johnson should write two volumes of no great bulk upon Church and State, which should comprise the whole substance of the argument. "He should erect a fort on the confines of each." Johnson was not unnaturalty displeased with the dialogue, and growled out, "Why should I be always writing?"

Presently, they went to see Dr. Adams, the doctor's old friend, who had been answering Hume. Boswell, who had done his best to court the acquaintance of Voltaire, Rousseau, Wilkes, and Hume himself, felt it desirable to reprove Adams for having met Hume with civility. He aired his admirable sentiments in a long speech, observing upon the connexion between theory and practice, and remarking, by way of practical application, that, if an infidel were at once vain and ugly, he might be compared to "Cicero's beautiful image of Virtue"—which would, as he seems to think, be a crushing retort. Boswell always delighted in fighting with his gigantic backer close behind him. Johnson, as he had doubtless expected, chimed in with the argument. "You should do your best," said Johnson, "to diminish the authority, as well as dispute the arguments of your adversary, because most people are biased more by personal respect than by reasoning." "You would not jostle a chimney-sweeper," said Adams. "Yes," replied Johnson, "if it were necessary to jostle him down."

The pair proceeded by post-chaise past Blenheim, and dined at a good inn at Chapelhouse. Johnson boasted of the superiority, long since vanished if it ever existed, of English to French inns, and quoted with great emotion Shenstone's lines—

> Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round,
> Where'er his stages may have been,
> Must sigh to think he still has found
> The warmest welcome at an inn.

As they drove along rapidly in the post-chaise, he exclaimed, "Life has not many better things than this." On another occasion he said that he should like to spend his life driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman, clever enough to add to the conversation. The pleasure was partly owing to the fact that his deafness was less troublesome in a carriage. But he admitted that there were drawbacks even to this pleasure. Boswell asked him whether he would not add a post-chaise journey to the other sole cause of happiness—namely, drunkenness. "No, sir," said Johnson, "you are driving rapidly *from* something or *to* something."

They went to Birmingham, where Boswell pumped Hector about Johnson's early days, and saw the works of Boulton, Watt's partner, who said to him, "I sell here, sir, what all the world desires to have—*power*." Thence they went to Lichfield, and met more of the rapidly thinning circle of Johnson's oldest friends. Here Boswell was a little scandalised by Johnson's warm exclamation on opening a letter—"One of the most dreadful things that has happened in my time!" This turned out to be the death of Thrale's only son. Boswell thought the phrase too big for the event, and was some time before he could feel a proper concern. He was, however, "curious to observe how Dr. Johnson would be affected," and was again a little scandalised by the reply to his consolatory remark that the Thrales still had daughters. "Sir," said Johnson, "don't you know how you yourself think? Sir, he wishes to propagate his name." The great man was actually putting the family sentiment of a brewer in the same category with the sentiments of the heir of Auchinleck. Johnson, however, calmed down, but resolved to hurry back to London. They stayed a night at Taylor's, who remarked that he had fought a good many battles for a physician, one of their common friends. "But you should consider, sir," said Johnson, "that by every one of your victories he is a loser; for every man of whom you get the better will be very angry, and resolve not to employ him, whereas if people get the better of you in argument about him, they will think 'We'll send for Dr. —— nevertheless!'"

It was after their return to London that Boswell won the greatest triumph of his friendship. He carried through a negotiation, to which, as Burke pleasantly said, there was nothing equal in the whole history of the *corps diplomatique*. At some moment of enthusiasm it had occurred to him to bring Johnson into company with Wilkes. The infidel demagogue was probably in the mind of the Tory High Churchman, when he threw out that pleasant little apophthegm about patriotism. To bring together two such opposites without provoking a collision would be the crowning triumph of Boswell's curiosity. He was ready to run all hazards as a chemist might try some new experiment at the risk of a destructive explosion; but being resolved, he took every precaution with admirable foresight.

Boswell had been invited by the Dillys, well-known booksellers of the day, to meet Wilkes. "Let us have Johnson," suggested the gallant Boswell. "Not for the world!" exclaimed Dilly. But, on Boswell's undertaking the negotiation, he consented to the experiment. Boswell went off to Johnson and politely invited him in Dilly's name. "I will wait upon him," said Johnson. "Provided, sir, I suppose," said the diplomatic Boswell, "that the company which he is to have is agreeable to you." "What do you mean, sir?" exclaimed Johnson. "What do you take me for? Do you think I am so ignorant of the world as to prescribe to a gentleman what company he is to have at his table?" Boswell worked the point a little farther, till, by judicious manipulation, he

had got Johnson to commit himself to meeting anybody—even Jack Wilkes, to make a wild hypothesis—at the Dillys' table. Boswell retired, hoping to think that he had fixed the discussion in Johnson's mind.

The great day arrived, and Boswell, like a consummate general who leaves nothing to chance, went himself to fetch Johnson to the dinner. The great man had forgotten the engagement, and was "buffeting his books" in a dirty shirt and amidst clouds of dust. When reminded of his promise, he said that he had ordered dinner at home with Mrs. Williams. Entreaties of the warmest kind from Boswell softened the peevish old lady, to whose pleasure Johnson had referred him. Boswell flew back, announced Mrs. Williams's consent, and Johnson roared, "Frank, a clean shirt!" and was soon in a hackney-coach. Boswell rejoiced like a "fortune-hunter who has got an heiress into a post-chaise with him to set out for Gretna Green." Yet the joy was with trembling. Arrived at Dillys', Johnson found himself amongst strangers, and Boswell watched anxiously from a corner. "Who is that gentleman?" whispered Johnson to Dilly. "Mr. Arthur Lee." Johnson whistled "too-too-too" doubtfully, for Lee was a patriot and an American. "And who is the gentleman in lace?" "Mr. Wilkes, sir." Johnson subsided into a window-seat and fixed his eye on a book. He was fairly in the toils. His reproof of Boswell was recent enough to prevent him from exhibiting his displeasure, and he resolved to restrain himself.

At dinner Wilkes, placed next to Johnson, took up his part in the performance. He pacified the sturdy moralist by delicate attentions to his needs. He helped him carefully to some fine veal. "Pray give me leave, sir; it is better here—a little of the brown—some fat, sir—a little of the stuffing—some gravy—let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter. Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange; or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest." "Sir, sir," cried Johnson, "I am obliged to you, sir." bowing and turning to him, with a look for some time of "surly virtue," and soon of complacency.

Gradually the conversation became cordial. Johnson told of the fascination exercised by Foote, who, like Wilkes, had succeeded in pleasing him against his will. Foote once took to selling beer, and it was so bad that the servants of Fitzherbert, one of his customers, resolved to protest. They chose a little black boy to carry their remonstrance; but the boy waited at table one day when Foote was present, and returning to his companions, said, "This is the finest man I have ever seen. I will not deliver your message; I will drink his beer." From Foote the transition was easy to Garrick, whom Johnson, as usual, defended against the attacks of others. He maintained that Garrick's reputation for avarice, though unfounded, had been rather useful than otherwise. "You despise a man for avarice, but you do not hate him." The clamour would have been more effectual, had it been directed against his living with splendour too great for a player. Johnson went on to

speak of the difficulty of getting biographical information. When he had wished to write a life of Dryden, he applied to two living men who remembered him. One could only tell him that Dryden had a chair by the fire at Will's Coffee-house in winter, which was moved to the balcony in summer. The other (Cibber) could only report that he remembered Dryden as a "decent old man, arbiter of critical disputes at Will's."

Johnson and Wilkes had one point in common—a vigorous prejudice against the Scotch, and upon this topic they cracked their jokes in friendly emulation. When they met upon a later occasion (1781, they still pursued this inexhaustible subject. Wilkes told how a privateer had completely plundered seven Scotch islands, and re-embarked with three and sixpence. Johnson now remarked in answer to somebody who said "Poor old England is lost!" "Sir, it is not so much to be lamented that old England is lost, as that the Scotch have found it." "You must know, sir," he said to Wilkes, "that I lately took my friend Boswell and showed him genuine civilized life in an English provincial town. I turned him loose at Lichfield. that he might see for once real civility, for you know he lives among savages in Scotland and among rakes in London." "Except," said Wilkes, "when he is with grave, sober, decent people like you and me." "And we ashamed of him," added Johnson, smiling.

Boswell had to bear some jokes against himself and his countrymen from the pair; but he had triumphed, and rejoiced greatly when he went home with Johnson. and heard the great man speak of his pleasant dinner to Mrs. Williams. Johnson seems to have been permanently reconciled to his foe. "Did we not hear so much said of Jack Wilkes," he remarked next year, "we should think more highly of his conversation. Jack has a great variety of talk, Jack is a scholar, and Jack has the manners of a gentleman. But, after hearing his name sounded from pole to pole as the phœnix of convivial felicity, we are disappointed in his company. He has always been at *me*, but I would do Jack a kindness rather than not. The contest is now over."

In fact, Wilkes had ceased to play any part in public life. When Johnson met him next (in 1781) they joked about such dangerous topics as some of Wilkes's political performances. Johnson sent him a copy of the *Lives*, and they were seen conversing *tete-à-tete* in confidential whispers about George II. and the King of Prussia. To Boswell's mind it suggested the happy days when the lion should lie down with the kid, or, as Dr. Barnard suggested, the goat.

In the year 1777 Johnson began the *Lives of the Poets*, in compliance with a request from the booksellers, who wished for prefaces to a large collection of English poetry. Johnson asked for this work the extremely modest sum of 200 guineas, when he might easily. according to Malone, have received 1000 or 1500. He did not meet Boswell till September, when they spent ten days together at Dr. Taylor's. The subject which specially interested

Boswell at this time was the fate of the unlucky Dr. Dodd, hanged for forgery in the previous June. Dodd seems to have been a worthless charlatan of the popular preacher variety. His crime would not in our days have been thought worthy of so severe a punishment; but his contemporaries were less shocked by the fact of death being inflicted for such a fault, than by the fact of its being inflicted on a clergyman. Johnson exerted himself to procure a remission of the sentence by writing various letters and petitions on Dodd's behalf. He seems to have been deeply moved by the man's appeal, and could "not bear the thought" that any negligence of his should lead to the death of a fellow-creature; but he said that if he had himself been in authority he would have signed the death-warrant, and for the man himself, he had as little respect as might be. He said, indeed, that Dodd was right in not joining in the "cant" about leaving a wretched world. "No, no," said the poor rogue, "it has been a very agreeable world to me." Dodd had allowed to pass for his own one of the papers composed for him by Johnson, and the Doctor was not quite pleased. When, however, Seward expressed a doubt as to Dodd's power of writing so forcibly, Johnson felt bound not to expose him. "Why should you think so? Depend upon it, sir, when any man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully." On another occasion, Johnson expressed a doubt himself as to whether Dodd had really composed a certain prayer on the night before his execution. "Sir, do you think that a man the night before he is to be hanged cares for the succession of the royal family? Though he *may* have composed this prayer then. A man who has been canting all his life may cant to the last; and yet a man who has been refused a pardon after so much petitioning, would hardly be praying thus fervently for the king."

The last day at Taylor's was characteristic. Johnson was very cordial to his disciple, and Boswell fancied that he could defend his master at "the point of his sword." "My regard for you," said Johnson, "is greater almost than I have words to express, but I do not choose to be always repeating it. Write it down in the first leaf of your pocket-book, and never doubt of it again." They became sentimental, and talked of the misery of human life. Boswell spoke of the pleasures of society. "Alas, sir," replied Johnson, like a true pessimist, "these are only struggles for happiness!" He felt exhilarated, he said, when he first went to Ranelagh, but he changed to the mood of Xerxes weeping at the sight of his army. "It went to my heart to consider that there was not one in all that brilliant circle that was not afraid to go home and think; but that the thoughts of each individual would be distressing when alone." Some years before he had gone with Boswell to the Pantheon and taken a more cheerful view. When Boswell doubted whether there were many happy people present, he said, "Yes, sir, there are many happy people here. There are many people here who are watching hundreds, and who think hundreds are watching them." The more permanent feeling was that which

he expressed in the "serene autumn night" in Taylor's garden. He was willing, however, to talk calmly about eternal punishment, and to admit the possibility of a "mitigated interpretation."

After supper he dictated to Boswell an argument in favour of the negro who was then claiming his liberty in Scotland. He hated slavery with a zeal which the excellent Boswell thought to be "without knowledge;" and on one occasion gave as a toast to some "very grave men" at Oxford, "Here's to the next insurrection of negroes in the West Indies." The hatred was combined with as hearty a dislike for American independence. "How is it," he said, "that we always hear the loudest yelps for liberty amongst the drivers of negroes?" The harmony of the evening was unluckily spoilt by an explosion of this prejudice. Boswell undertook the defence of the colonists, and the discussion became so fierce that though Johnson had expressed a willingness to sit up all night with him, they were glad to part after an hour or two, and go to bed.

In 1778, Boswell came to London and found Johnson absorbed, to an extent which apparently excited his jealousy, by his intimacy with the Thrales. They had, however, several agreeable meetings. One was at the club, and Boswell's report of the conversation is the fullest that we have of any of its meetings. A certain reserve is indicated by his using initials for the interlocutors, of whom, however, one can be easily identified as Burke. The talk began by a discussion of an antique statue, said to be the dog of Alcibiades, and valued at 1000*l*. Burke said that the representation of no animal could be worth so much. Johnson, whose taste for art was a vanishing quantity, said that the value was proportional to the difficulty. A statue, as he argued on another occasion, would be worth nothing if it were cut out of a carrot. Everything, he now said, was valuable which "enlarged the sphere of human powers." The first man who balanced a straw upon his nose, or rode upon three horses at once, deserved the applause of mankind; and so statues of animals should be preserved as a proof of dexterity, though man should not continue such fruitless labours.

The conversation became more instructive under the guidance of Burke. He maintained what seemed to his hearers a paradox, though it would be interesting to hear his arguments from some profounder economist than Boswell, that a country would be made more populous by emigration. "There are bulls enough in Ireland," he remarked incidentally in the course of the argument. "So, sir, I should think from your argument," said Johnson, for once condescending to an irresistible pun. It is recorded, too, that he once made a bull himself, observing that a horse was so slow that when it went up hill, it stood still. If he now failed to appreciate Burke's argument, he made one good remark. Another speaker said that unhealthy countries were the most populous. "Countries which are the most populous," replied Johnson, "have the most destructive diseases. That is the true state of the proposition;" and indeed, the remark applies to the case of emigration.

A discussion then took place as to whether it would be worth while for Burke to take so much trouble with speeches which neve decided a vote. Burke replied that a speech, though it did not gain one vote, would have an influence, and maintained that the House of Commons was not wholly corrupt. "We are all more or less governed by interest," was Johnson's comment. "But interest will not do everything. In a case which admits of doubt, we try to think on the side which is for our interest, and generally bring ourselves to act accordingly. But the subject must admit of diversity of colouring; it must receive a colour on that side. In the House of Commons there are members enough who will not vote what is grossly absurd and unjust. No, sir, there must always be right enough, or appearance of right, to keep wrong in countenance." After some deviations, the conversation returned to this point. Johnson and Burke agreed on a characteristic statement. Burke said that from his experience he had learnt to think better of mankind. "From my experience," replied Johnson, "I have found them worse on commercial dealings, more disposed to cheat then I had any notion of; but more disposed to do one another good than I had conceived." "Less just, and more beneficent," as another speaker suggested. Johnson proceeded to say that considering the pressure of want, it was wonderful that men would do so much for each other. The greatest liar is said to speak more truth than falsehood, and perhaps the worst man might do more good than not. But when Boswell suggested that perhaps experience might increase our estimate of human happiness, Johnson returned to his habitual pessimism. "No, sir, the more we inquire, the more we shall find men less happy." The talk soon wandered off into a disquistiion upon the folly of deliberately testing the strength of our friend's affection,

The evening ended by Johnson accepting a commission to write to a friend who had given to the Club a hogshead of claret, and to request another, with "a happy ambiguity of expression," in the hopes that it might also be a present.

Some days afterwards, another conversation took place, which has a certain celebrity in Boswellian literature. The scene was at Dilly's, and the guests included Miss Seward and Mrs. Knowles, a well-known Quaker Lady. Before dinner Johnson seized upon a book which he kept in his lap during dinner, wrapped up in the table-cloth. His attention was not distracted from the various business of the hour, but he hit upon a topic which happily combined the two approprate veins of thought. He boasted that he would write a cookery-book upon philosophical principles; and declared in opposition to Miss Seward that such a task was beyond the sphere of woman. Perhaps this led to a discussion upon the privileges of men, in which Johnson put down Mrs. Knowles, who had some hankering for women's rights, by the Shakspearian maxim that if two men ride on a horse, one must ride behind. Driven from her position in this world, poor Mrs. Knowles hoped that sexes might be equal in the next. Boswell reproved her by

the remark already quoted, that men might as well expect to be equal to angels. He enforces this view by an illustration suggested by the "Rev. Mr. Brown of Utrecht," who had observed that a great or small glass might be equally full, though not holding equal quantities. Mr. Brown intended this for a confutation of Hume, who has said that a little Miss, dressed for a ball, may be as happy as an orator who has won some triumphant success.*

The conversation thus took a theological turn, and Mrs. Knowles was fortunate enough to win Johnson's high approval. He defended a doctrine maintained by Soame Jenyns, that friendship is not a Christian virtue. Mrs. Knowles remarked that Jesus had twelve disciples, but there was *one* whom he *loved*. Johnson, "with eyes sparkling benignantly," exclaimed, "Very well indeed, madam; you have said very well!"

So far all had gone smoothly; but here, for some inexplicable reason, Johnson burst into a sudden fury against the American rebels, whom he described as "rascals, robbers, pirates," and roared out a tremendous volley, which might almost have been audible across the Atlantic. Boswell sat and trembled, but gradually diverted the sage to less exciting topics. The name of Jonathan Edwards suggested a discussion upon free will and necessity, upon which poor Boswell was much given to worry himself. Some time afterwards Johnson wrote to him, in answer to one of his lamentations: "I hoped you had got rid of all this hypocrisy of misery. What have you to do with liberty and necessity? Or what more than to hold your tongue about it?" Boswell could never take this sensible advice; but he got little comfort from his oracle. "We know that we are all free, and there's an end on't," was his statement on one occasion, and now he could only say, "All theory is against the freedom of the will, and all experience for it."

Some familiar topics followed, which play a great part in Boswell's reports. Among the favourite topics of the sentimentalists of the day was the denunciation of "luxury," and of civilised life in general. There was a disposition to find in the South Sea savages or American Indians an embodiment of the fancied state of nature. Johnson heartily despised the affectation. He was told of an American woman who had to be bound in order to keep her from savage life. "She must have been an animal, a beast," said Boswell. "Sir," said Johnson, "she was a speaking cat." Somebody quoted to him with admiration the soliloquy of an officer who had lived in the wilds of America: "Here am I, free and unrestrained, amidst the rude magnificence of nature, with the Indian woman by my side, and this gun, with which I can procure food when I want it! What more can be desired for human happiness?" "Do not allow yourself, sir," replied Johnson, "to be imposed upon by such gross absurdity. It is sad stuff; it is brutish. If a bull could speak, he might as well exclaim, 'Here am I with this cow and this

* Boswell remarks as a curious coincidence that the illustration had been used by a Dr. King, a dissenting minister. Doubtless is has been used often enough. For one instance see *Donne's Sermons* (Alford's Edition), vol. i., p. 5.

grass; what being can enjoy greater felicity?'" When Johnson implored Boswell to "clear his mind of cant," he was attacking his disciple for affecting a serious depression about public affairs; but the cant which he hated would certainly have included as its first article an admiration for the state of nature.

On the present occasion Johnson defended luxury, and said that he had learnt much from Mandeville—a shrewd cynic, in whom Johnson's hatred for humbug is exaggerated into a general disbelief in real as well as sham nobleness of sentiment. As the conversation proceeded, Johnson expressed his habitual horror of death, and caused Miss Seward's ridicule by talking seriously of ghosts and the importance of the question of their reality; and then followed an explosion, which seems to have closed this characteristic evening. A young woman had become a Quaker under the influence of Mrs. Knowles, who now proceeded to deprecate Johnson's wrath at what he regarded as an apostasy. "Madam," he said, "she is an odious wench," and he proceeded to denounce her audacity in presuming to choose a religion for herself. "She knew no more of the points of difference," he said, "than of the difference between the Copernican and Ptolemaic systems." When Mrs. Knowles said that she had the New Testament before her, he said that it was the "most difficult book in the world," and he proceeded to attack the unlucky proselyte with a fury which shocked the two ladies. Mrs. Knowles afterwards published a report of this conversation, and obtained another report, with which, however, she was not satisfied, from Miss Seward. Both of them represent the poor doctor as hopelessly confuted by the mild dignity and calm reason of Mrs. Knowles, though the triumph is painted in far the brightest colours by Mrs. Knowles herself Unluckily, there is not a trace of Johnson's manner, except in one phrase, in either report, and they are chiefly curious as an indirect testimony of Boswell's superior powers, The passage, in which both the ladies agree, is that Johnson, on the expression of Mrs. Knowles's hope that he would meet the young lady in another world, retorted that he was not fond of meeting fools anywhere.

Poor Boswell was at this time a water-drinker by Johnson's recommendation, though unluckily for himself he never broke off his drinking habits for long. They had a conversation at Paoli's, in which Boswell argued against his present practice. Johnson remarked "that wine gave a man nothing, but only put in motion what had been locked up in frost." It was a key, suggested some one, which opened a box, but the box might be full or empty. "Nay, sir," said Johnson, "conversation is the key, wine is a pick-lock, which forces open the box and injures it. A man should cultivate his mind, so as to have that confidence and readiness without wine which wine gives." Boswell characteristically said that the great difficulty was from "benevolence." It was hard to refuse "a good, worthy man" who asked you to try his cellar. This, according to Johnson, was mere conceit, implying an exaggerated estimate of your importance to your entertainer.

Reynolds gallantly took up the opposite side, and produced the one recorded instance of a Johnsonian blush. "I won't argue any more with you, sir," said Johnson, who thought every man to be elevated who drank wine, "you are too far gone." "I should have thought so indeed, sir, had I made such a speech as you have now done," said Reynolds; and Johnson apologised with the aforesaid blush.

The explosion was soon over on this occasion. Not long afterwards, Johnson attacked Boswell so fiercely at a dinner at Reynolds's, that the poor disciple kept away for a week. They made it up when they met next, and Johnson solaced Boswell's wounded vanity by highly commending an image made by him to express his feelings. "I don't care how often or how high Johnson tosses me, when only friends are present, for then I fall upon soft ground; but I do not like falling on stones, which is the case when enemies are present." The phrase may recall one of Johnson's happiest illustrations. When some one said in his presence that a *congé d'élire* might be considered as only a strong recommendation: "Sir," replied Johnson, "it is such a recommendation as if I should throw you out of a two-pair of stairs window, and recommend you to fall soft."

It is perhaps time to cease these extracts from Boswell's reports. The next two years were less fruitful. In 1779 Boswell was careless, though twice in London, and in 1780, he did not pay his annual visit. Boswell has partly filled up the gap by a collection of sayings made by Langton, some passages from which have been quoted, and his correspondence gives various details. Garrick died in January of 1779, and Beauclerk in March, 1780. Johnson himself seems to have shown few symptoms of increasing age; but a change was approaching, and the last years of his life were destined to be clouded, not merely by physical weakness, but by a change of circumstances which had great influence upon his happiness.

CHAPTER V.

THE CLOSING YEARS OF JOHNSON'S LIFE.

In following Boswell's guidance we have necessarily seen only one side of Johnson's life; and probably that side which had least significance for the man himself.

Boswell saw in him chiefly the great dictator of conversation; and though the reports of Johnson's talk represent his character in spite of some qualifications with unusual fulness, there were many traits very inadequately revealed at the Mitre or the Club, at Mrs. Thrale's, or in meetings with Wilkes or Reynolds. We may catch some glimpses from his letters and diaries of that inward life which consisted generally in a long succession of struggles against an oppressive and often paralysing melancholy. Another most noteworthy side to his character is revealed in his relations to persons too humble for admission to the tables at which he exerted a despotic sway. Upon this side Johnson was almost entirely loveable. We often have to regret the imperfection of the records of

> The best portion of a good man's life,
> His little, nameless, unremembered acts
> Of kindness and of love.

Everywhere in Johnson's letters and in the occasional anecdotes, we come upon indications of a tenderness and untiring benevolence which would make us forgive far worse faults than have ever been laid to his charge. Nay, the very asperity of the man's outside becomes endeared to us by the association. His irritability never vented itself against the helpless, and his rough impatience of fanciful trouble implied no want of sympathy for real sorrow. One of Mrs. Thrale's anecdotes is intended to show Johnson's harshness:—"When I one day lamented the loss of a first cousin killed in America, 'Pr'ythee, my dear,' said he, 'have done with canting; how would the world be the worse for it, I may ask, if all your relations were at once spitted like larks and roasted for Presto's supper?' Presto was the dog that lay under the table while he talked." The counter version, given by Boswell is, that Mrs. Thrale related her cousin's death in the midst of a hearty supper, and that Johnson, shocked at her want of feeling, said, "Madam, it would give *you* very little concern if all your relations were spitted like those larks, and roasted for Presto's supper." Taking

the most unfavourable version, we may judge how much real indifference to human sorrow was implied by seeing how Johnson was affected by a loss of one of his humblest friends. It is but one case of many. In 1767, he took leave, as he notes in his diary, of his "dear old friend, Catherine Chambers," who had been for about forty-three years in the service of his family. "I desired all to withdraw," he says, "then told her that we were to part for ever, and, as Christians, we should part with prayer, and that I would, if she was willing, say a short prayer beside her. She expressed great desire to hear me, and held up her poor hands as she lay in bed, with great fervour, while I prayed, kneeling by her, in nearly the following words"—which shall not be repeated here—"I then kissed her," he adds. "She told me that to part was the greatest pain that she had ever felt, and that she hoped we should meet again in a better place. I expressed, with swelled eyes, and great emotion of kindness, the same hopes. We kissed and parted—I humbly hope to meet again and part no more."

A man with so true and tender a heart could say serenely, what with some men would be a mere excuse for want of sympathy, that he "hated to hear people whine about metaphysical distresses when there was so much want and hunger in the world." He had a sound and righteous contempt for all affectation of excessive sensibility. Suppose, said Boswell to him, whilst their common friend Baretti was lying under a charge of murder, "that one of your intimate friends were apprehended for an offence for which he might be hanged." "I should do what I could," replied Johnson, "to bail him, and give him any other assistance; but if he were once fairly hanged, I should not suffer." "Would you eat your dinner that day, sir?" asks Boswell. "Yes, sir: and eat it as if he were eating with me. Why there's Baretti, who's to be tried for his life to-morrow. Friends have risen up for him upon every side; yet if he should be hanged, none of them will eat a slice of plum-pudding the less. Sir, that sympathetic feeling goes a very little way in depressing the mind." Boswell illustrated the subject by saying that Tom Davies had just written a letter to Foote, telling him that he could not sleep from concern about Baretti, and at the same time recommending a young man who kept a pickle-shop Johnson summed up by the remark: "You will find these very feeling people are not very ready to do you good. They *pay* you by *feeling*." Johnson never objected to feeling, but to the waste of feeling.

In a similar vein he told Mrs. Thrale that a "surly fellow" like himself had no compassion to spare for "wounds given to vanity and softness," whilst witnessing the common sight of actual want in great cities. On Lady Tavistock's death, said to have been caused by grief for her husband's loss, he observed that her life might have been saved if she had been put into a small chandler's shop, with a child to nurse. When Mrs. Thrale suggested that a lady would be grieved because her friend had lost the chance of a fortune, "She will suffer as much, perhaps," he replied, "as your

horse did when your cow miscarried." Mrs. Thrale testified that he once reproached her sternly for complaining of the dust. When he knew, he said, how many poor families would perish next winter for want of the bread which the drought would deny, he could not bear to hear ladies sighing for rain on account of their complexions or their clothes. While reporting such sayings, she adds, that he loved the poor as she never saw any one else love them, with an earnest desire to make them happy. His charity was unbounded; he proposed to allow himself one hundred a year out of the three hundred of his pension; but the Thrales could never discover that he really spent upon himself more than £70, or at most £80. He had numerous dependants, abroad as well as at home, who "did not like to see him latterly, unless he brought 'em money." He filled his pockets with small cash which he distributed to beggars in defiance of politicial economy. When told that the recipients only laid it out upon gin or tobacco, he replied that it was savage to deny them the few coarse pleasures which the richer disdained. Numerous instances are given of more judicious charity. When, for example, a Benedictine monk, whom he had seen in Paris, became a Protestant, Johnson supported him for some months in London, till he could get a living. Once coming home late at night, he found a poor woman lying in the street. He carried her to his house on his back, and found that she was reduced to the lowest stage of want, poverty, and disease. He took care of her at his own charge, with all tenderness, until she was restored to health, and tried to have her put into a virtuous way of living. His house, in his later years, was filled with various waifs and strays, to whom he gave hospitality and sometimes support, defending himself by saying that if he did not help them nobody else would. The head of his household was Miss Williams, who had been a friend of his wife's, and after coming to stay with him, in order to undergo an operation for cataract, became a permanent inmate of his house. She had a small income of some £40 a year, partly from the charity of connexions of her father's, and partly arising from a little book of miscellanies published by subscription. She was a woman of some sense and cultivation, and when she died (in 1783) Johnson said that for thirty years she had been to him as a sister. Boswell's jealousy was excited during the first period of his acquaintance, when Goldsmith one night went home with Johnson, crying "I go to Miss Williams"—a phrase which implied admission to an intimacy from which Boswell was as yet excluded. Boswell soon obtained the coveted privilege, and testifies to the respect with which Johnson always treated the inmates of his family. Before leaving her to dine with Boswell at the hotel, he asked her what little delicacy should be sent to her from the tavern. Poor Miss Williams, however, was peevish, and, according to Hawkins, had been known to drive Johnson out of the room by her reproaches, and Boswell's delicacy was shocked by the supposition that she tested the fulness of cups of tea, by putting her finger inside. We are glad to know that this was a false impression, and, in fact, Miss Williams, how-

ever unfortunate in temper and circumstances, seems to have been a lady by manners and education.

The next inmate of this queer household was Robert Levett, a man who had been a waiter at a coffee-house in Paris frequented by surgeons. They had enabled him to pick up some of their art, and he set up as an "obscure practiser in physic amongst the lower people" in London. He took from them such fees as he could get, including provisions, sometimes, unfortunately for him, of the potable kind. He was once entrapped into a queer marriage, and Johnson had to arrange a separation from his wife. Johnson, it seems, had a good opinion of his medical skill, and more or less employed his services in that capacity. He attended his patron at his breakfast; breakfasting, said Percy, "on the crust of a roll, which Johnson threw to him after tearing out the crumb." The phrase, it is said, goes too far; Johnson always took pains that Levett should be treated rather as a friend than as a dependant.

Besides these humble friends, there was a Mrs. Desmoulins, the daughter of a Lichfield physician. Johnson had had some quarrel with the father in his youth for revealing a confession of the mental disease which tortured him from early years. He supported Mrs. Desmoulins none the less, giving house-room to her and her daughter, and making her an allowance of half-a-guinea a week, a sum equal to a twelfth part of his pension. Frances Barber has already been mentioned, and we have a dim vision of a Miss Carmichael, who completed what he facetiously called his "seraglio." It was anything but a happy family. He summed uptheir relations in a letter to Mrs. Thrale. "Williams," he says, "hates "every body; Levett hates Desmoulins, and does not love Williams; Desmoulins hates them both; Poll (Miss Carmichael) loves none of them." Frank Barber complained of Miss Williams's authority, and Miss Williams of Frank's insubordination. Intruders who had taken refuge under his roof, brought their children there in his absence, and grumbled if their dinners were ill-dressed. The old man bore it all, relieving himself by an occasional growl, but reproaching any who ventured to join in the growl for their indifference to the sufferings of poverty. Levett died in January, 1782; Miss Williams died after a lingering illness, in 1783, and Johnson grieved in solitude for the loss of his testy companions. A poem, composed upon Levett's death, records his feelings in language which wants the refinement of Goldsmith or the intensity of Cowper's pathos, but which is yet so sincere and tender as to be more impressive than far more elegant compositions. It will be a fitting close to this brief indication of one side of Johnson's character, too easily overlooked in Boswell's pages, to quote part of what Thackeray truly calls the "sacred verses" upon Levett:—

> Well tried through many a varying year
> See Levett to the grave descend,
> Officious, innocent, sincere,
> Of every friendless name the friend.

In misery's darkest cavern known,
  His ready help was ever nigh;
Where hopeless anguish pour'd his groan,
  And lonely want retired to die.

No summons mock'd by dull delay,
  No petty gains disdain'd by pride
The modest wants of every day,
  The toil of every day supplied.

His virtues walk'd their narrow round,
  Nor made a pause, nor left a void;
And sure the eternal Master found
  His single talent well employ'd.

The busy day, the peaceful night,
  Unfelt, uncounted, glided by;
His frame was firm, his eye was bright,
  Though now his eightieth year was nigh.

Then, with no throbs of fiery pain,
  No cold gradations of decay,
Death broke at once the vital chain,
  And freed his soul the easiest was.

The last stanza smells somewhat of the country tombstone; but to read the whole and to realise the deep, manly sentiment which it implies, without tears in one's eyes is to me at least impossible.

There is one little touch which may be added before we proceed to the closing years of this tender-hearted old moralist. Johnson loved little children, calling them "little dears," and cramming them with sweetmeats, though we regret to add that he once snubbed a little child rather severely for a want of acquaintance with the *Pilgrim's Progress*. His cat, Hodge, should be famous amongst the lovers of the race. He used to go out and buy oysters for Hodge, that the servants might not take a dislike to the animal from having to serve it themselves. He reproached his wife for beating a cat before the maid lest she should give a precedent for cruelty. Boswell, who cherished an antipathy to cats, suffered as seeing Hodge scrambling up Johnson's breast, whilst he smiled and robbed the beast's back and pulled its tail. Bozzy remarked that he was a fine cat. "Why, yes, sir," said Johnson, "but I have had cats whom I liked better than this," and then, lest Hodge should be put out of countenance, he added, "but he is a very fine cat, a very fine cat indeed." He told Langton once of a young gentleman, who, when last heard of, was "running about town shooting cats; but," he murmured in a kindly reverie, "Hodge shan't be shot: no, no, Hodge shall not be shot!" Once, when Johnson was staying at a house in Wales, the gardener brought in a hare which had been caught in the potatoes. The order was given to take it to the cook. Johnson asked to have it placed in his arms. He took it to the window and let it go, shouting to in-

crease its speed. When his host complained that he had perhaps spoilt the dinner, Johnson replied by insisting that the rights of hospitality included an animal which had thus placed itself under the protection of the master of the garden.

We must proceed, however, to a more serious event. The year 1781 brought with it a catastrophe which profoundly affected the brief remainder of Johnson's life Mr. Thrale, whose health had been shaken by fits, died suddenly on the 4th of April. The ultimate consequence was Johnson's loss of the second home, in which he had so often found refuge from melancholy, alleviation of physical suffering, and pleasure in social converse. The change did not follow at once, but as the catastrophe of a little social drama, upon the rights and wrongs of which a good deal of controversy has been expended.

Johnson was deeply affected by the loss of a friend whose face, as he said, "had never been turned upon him through fifteen years but with respect and benignity." He wrote solemn and affecting letters to the widow, and busied himself strenuously in her service. Thrale had made him one of his executors, leaving him a small legacy; and Johnson took, it seems, a rather simple-minded pleasure in dealing with important commercial affairs and signing cheques for large sums of more. The old man of letters, to whom three hundred a year had been superabundant wealth, was amused at finding himself in the position of a man of business, regulating what was then regarded as a princely fortune. The brewery was sold after a time, and Johnson bustled about with an ink-horn and pen in his button-hole. When asked what was the value of the property, he replied magniloquenity, "We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice." The brewery was in fact sold to Barclay, Perkins, and Co. for the sum of 135,000*l.*, and some years afterwards it was the largest concern of the kind in the world.

The first effect of the change was probably rather to tighten than to relax the bond of union with the Thrale family. During the winter of 1781-2, Johnson's infirmities were growing upon him. In the beginning of 1782 he was suffering from an illness which excited serious apprehensions, and he went to Mrs. Thrale's, as the only house where he could use "all the freedom that sickness requires." She nursed him carefully, and expressed her feelings with characteristic vehemence in a curious journal which he had encouraged her to keep. It records her opinions about her affairs and her family, with a frankness remarkable even in writing intended for no eye but her own. "Here is Mr. Johnson very ill," she writes on the 1st of February; . . . . "What shall we do for him? If I lose *him*, I am more than undone—friend, father, guardian, confidant! God give me health and patience! What shall I do?" There is no reason to doubt the sincerity, though they seem to represent a mood of excitement. They show that for ten months after Thrale's death Mrs. Thrale was keenly sensitive to the value of Johnson's friendship.

A change, however, was approaching. Towards the end of 1780 Mrs. Thrale had made the acquaintance of an Italian musician named Piozzi, a man of amiable and honourable character, making an independent income by his profession, but to the eyes of most people rather inoffensive than specially attractive. The friendship between Mrs. Thrale and Piozzi rapidly became closer, and by the end of 1781 she was on very intimate terms with the gentleman whom she calls "my Piozzi." He had been making a professional trip to the Continent during part of the period since her husband's death, and upon his return in November, Johnson congratulated her upon having two friends who loved her, in terms which suggest no existing feeling of jealousy. During 1782 the mutual affection of the lady and the musician became stronger, and in the autumn they had avowed it to each other, and were discussing the question of marriage.

No one who has had some experience of life will be inclined to condemn Mrs. Thrale for her passion. Rather the capacity for a passion not excited by an intrinsically unworthy object should increase our esteem for her. Her marriage with Thrale had been, as has been said, one of convenience; and, though she bore him many children and did her duty faithfully, she never loved him. Towards the end of his life he had made her jealous by very marked attentions to the pretty and sentimental Sophy Streatfield, which once caused a scene at his table; and during the last two years his mind had been weakened, and his conduct had caused her anxiety and discomfort. It is not surprising that she should welcome the warm and simple devotion of her new lover, though she was of a ripe age and the mother of grown-up daughters.

It is, however, equally plain that an alliance with a foreign fiddler was certain to shock British respectability. It is the old story of the quarrel between Philistia and Bohemia. Nor was respectability without much to say for itself. Piozzi was a Catholic as well as a foreigner; to marry him was in all probability to break with daughters just growing into womanhood, whom it was obviously her first duty to protect. The marriage, therefore, might be regarded as not merely a revolt against conventional morality, but as leading to a desertion of country, religion, and family. Her children, her husband's friends, and her whole circle were certain to look upon the match with feelings of the strongest disapproval, and she admitted to herself that the objections were founded upon something more weighty than a fear of the world's censure.

Johnson, in particular, among whose virtues one cannot reckon a superiority to British prejudice, would inevitably consider the marriage as simply degrading. Foreseeing this, and wishing to avoid the pain of rejecting advice which she felt unable to accept, she refrained from retaining her "friend, father, and guardian" in the position of "confidant." Her situation in the summer of 1782 was therefore exceedingly trying. She was unhappy at home. Her children, she complains, did not love her; her servants "devoured" her; her friends censured her; and her expenses were ex-

cessive, whilst the loss of a lawsuit strained her resources. Johnson, sickly, suffering and descending into the gloom of approaching decay, was present like a charged thunder-cloud ready to burst at any moment, if she allowed him to approach the chief subject of her thoughts. Though not in love with Mrs. Thrale, he had a very intelligible feeling of jealousy towards any one who threatened to distract her allegiance. Under such circumstances we might expect the state of things which Miss Burney described long afterwards (though with some confusion of dates). Mrs. Thrale, she says, was absent and agitated, restless in manner, and hurried in speech, forcing smiles, and averting her eyes from her friends; neglecting every one, including Johnson and excepting only Miss Burney herself, to whom the secret was confided, and the situation therefore explained. Gradually, according to Miss Burney, she became more petulant to Johnson than she was herself aware, gave palpable hints of being worried by his company, and finally excited his resentment and suspicion. In one or two utterances, though he doubtless felt the expedience of reserve, he intrusted his forebodings to Miss Burney, and declared that Streatham was lost to him for ever.

At last, in the end of August, the crisis came. Mrs. Thrale's lawsuit had gone against her. She thought it desirable to go abroad and save money. It had moreover been "long her dearest wish" to see Italy, with Piozzi for a guide. The one difficulty (as she says in her journal at the time), was that it seemed equally hard to part with Johnson or to take him with her till he had regained strength. At last, however, she took courage to confide to him her plans for travel. To her extreme annoyance he fully approved of them. He advised her to go; anticipated her return in two or three years: and told her daughter that he should not accompany them, even if invited. No behaviour, it may be admitted, could be more provoking than this unforeseen reasonableness. To nerve oneself to part with a friend, and to find the friend perfectly ready, and all your battery of argument thrown away is most vexatious. The poor man should have begged her to stay with him, or to take him with her; he should have made the scene which she professed to dread, but which would have been the best proof of her power. The only conclusion which could really have satisfied her—though she, in all probability, did not know it—would have been an outburst which would have justified a rupture, and allowed her to protest against his tyranny as she now proceeded to protest against his complacency.

Johnson wished to go to Italy two years later; and his present willingness to be left was probably caused by a growing sense of the dangers which threatened their friendship. Mrs. Thrale's anger appears in her journal. He had never really loved her, she declares; his affection for her had been interested, though even in her wrath she admits that he really loved her husband; he cared less for her conversation, which she had fancied necessary to his existence, than for her "roast beef and plumb pudden," which he now devours

too "dirtily for endurance." She was fully resolved to go. and yet she could not bear that her going should fail to torture the friend whom for eighteen years she had loved and cherished so kindly.

No one has a right at once to insist upon the compliance of his friends, and to insist that it should be a painful compliance. Still Mrs. Thrale's petulant outburst was natural enough. It requires notice because her subsequent account of the rupture has given rise to attacks on Johnson's character. Her "Anecdotes," written in 1785, show that her real affection for Johnson was still coloured by resentment for his conduct at this and a later period. They have an apologetic character which shows itself in a statement as to the origin of the quarrel, curiously different from the contemporary accounts in the diary. She says substantially, and the whole book is written so as to give probability to the assertion, that Johnson's bearishness and demands upon her indulgence had become intolerable, when he was no longer under restraint from her husband's presence. She therefore "took advantage" of her lost lawsuit and other troubles to leave London, and thus escape from his domestic tyranny. He no longer, as she adds, suffered from anything but "old age and general infirmity" (a tolerably wide exception!), and did not require her nursing. She therefore withdrew from the yoke to which she had contentedly submitted during her husband's life, but which was intolerable when her "coadjutor was no more."

Johnson's society was, we may easily believe, very trying to a widow in such a position; and it seems to be true that Thrale was better able than Mrs. Thrale to restrain his oddities, little as the lady shrunk at times from reasonable plain-speaking. But the later account involves something more than a bare suppression of the truth. The excuse about his health is, perhaps, the worst part of her case, because obviously insincere. Nobody could be more fully aware than Mrs. Thrale that Johnson's infirmities were rapidly gathering, and that another winter or two must in all probability be fatal to him. She knew, therefore, that he was never more in want of the care which, as she seems to imply, had saved him from the specific tendency to something like madness. She knew, in fact, that she was throwing him upon the care of his other friends, zealous and affectionate enough, it is true, but yet unable to supply him with the domestic comforts of Streatham. See clearly felt that this was a real injury, inevitable it might be under the circumstances, but certainly not to be extenuated by the paltry evasion as to his improved health. So far from Johnson's health being now established, she had not dared to speak until his temporary recovery from a dangerous illness, which had provoked her at the time to the strongest expressions of anxious regret. She had (according to the diary) regarded a possible breaking of the yoke in the early part of 1782 as a terrible evil, which would "more than ruin her." Even when resolved to leave Streatham, her one great difficulty is the dread of parting with Johnson, and the pecuniary troubles are the solid and conclusive reason. In the later account the money

question is the mere pretext; the desire to leave Johnson the true motive; and the long-cherished desire to see Italy with Piozzi is judiciously dropped out of notice altogether.

The truth is plain enough. Mrs. Thrale was torn by conflicting feelings. She still loved Johnson, and yet dreaded his certain disapproval of her strongest wishes. She respected him, but was resolved not to follow his advice. She wished to treat him with kindness and to be repaid with gratitude, and yet his presence and his affection were full of intolerable inconveniences. When an old friendship becomes a burden, the smaller infirmities of manner and temper to which we once submitted willingly become intolerable. She had borne with Johnson's modes of eating and with his rough reproofs to herself and her friends during sixteen years of her married life; and for nearly a year of her widowhood she still clung to him as the wisest and kindest of monitors. His manners had undergone no spasmodic change. They became intolerable when, for other reasons, she resented his possible interference, and wanted a very different guardian and confidant; and, therefore, she wished to part, and yet wished that the initiative should come from him.

The decision to leave Streatham was taken. Johnson parted with deep regret from the house; he read a chapter of the Testament in the library; he took leave of the church with a kiss; he composed a prayer commending the family to the protection of Heaven; and he did not forget to note in his journal the details of the last dinner of which he partook. This quaint observation may have been due to some valetudinary motive, or, more probably, to some odd freak of association. Once, when eating an omelette, he was deeply affected because it recalled his old friend Nugent. "Ah, my dear friend," he said "in an agony," "I shall never eat omelette with thee again!" And in the present case there is an obscure reference to some funeral connected in his mind with a meal. The unlucky entry has caused some ridicule, but need hardly convince us that his love of the family in which for so many years he had been an honoured and honour-giving inmate was, as Miss Seward amiably suggests, in great measure "kitchen-love."

No immediate rupture followed the abandonment of the Streatham establishment. Johnson spent some weeks at Brighton with Mrs. Thrale, during which a crisis was taking place, without his knowledge, in her relations to Piozzi. After vehement altercations with her daughters, whom she criticises with great bitterness for their utter want of heart, she resolved to break with Piozzi for at least a time. Her plan was to go to Bath, and there to retrench her expenses, in the hopes of being able to recall her lover at some future period. Meanwhile he left her and returned to Italy. After another winter in London, during which Johnson was still a frequent intimate of her house, she went to Bath with her daughters in April, 1783. A melancholy period followed for both the friends. Mrs. Thrale lost a younger daughter, and Johnson had a paralytic stroke in June. Death was sending preliminary warnings. A correspondence was kept up, which implies that the old terms were not ostensibly broken.

Mrs. Thrale speaks tartly more than once; and Johnson's letters go into medical details with his customary plainness of speech, and he occasionally indulges in laments over the supposed change in her feelings. The gloom is thickening, and the old playful gallantry has died out. The old man evidently felt himself deserted, and suffered from the breaking-up of the asylum he had loved so well. The final catastrophe came in 1784, less than six months before Johnson's death.

After much suffering in mind and body, Mrs. Thrale had at last induced her daughters to consent to her marriage with Piozzi. She sent for him at once, and they were married in June, 1784. A painful correspondence followed. Mrs. Thrale announced her marriage in a friendly letter to Johnson, excusing her previous silence on the ground that discussion could only have caused them pain. The revelation, though Johnson could not have been quite unprepared, produced one of his bursts of fury. "Madam, if I interpret your letter rightly," wrote the old man, "you are ignominiously married. If it is yet undone, let us once more talk together. If you have abandoned your children and your religion, God forgive your wickedness! If you have forfeited your fame and your country, may your folly do no further mischief! If the last act is yet to do, I, who have loved you, esteemed you, reverenced you, and served you—I, who long thought you the first of womankind—entreat that before your fate is irrevocable, I may once more see you! I was, I once was, madam, most truly yours, Sam. Johnson."

Mrs. Thrale replied with spirit and dignity to this cry of blind indignation, speaking of her husband with becoming pride, and resenting the unfortunate phrase about her loss of "fame." She ended by declining further intercourse till Johnson could change his opinion of Piozzi. Johnson admitted in his reply that he had no right to resent her conduct; expressed his gratitude for the kindness which had "soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched," and implored her ("superfluously," as she says) to induce Piozzi to settle in England. He then took leave of her with an expression of sad forebodings. Mrs. Thrale, now Mrs. Piozzi, says that she replied affectionately; but the letter is missing. The friendship was broken off, and during the brief remainder of Johnson's life, the Piozzis were absent from England.

Of her there is little more to be said. After passing some time in Italy, where she became a light of that wretched little Della Cruscan society of which some faint memory is preserved by Gifford's ridicule, now pretty nearly forgotten with its objects, she returned with her husband to England. Her anecdotes of Johnson, published soon after his death, had a success which, in spite of much ridicule, encouraged her to some further literary efforts of a sprightly but ephemeral kind. She lived happily with Piozzi, and never had cause to regret her marriage. She was reconciled to her daughters sufficiently to renew a friendly intercourse; but the elder ones set up a separate establishment. Piozzi died not long afterwards. She was still a vivacious old lady, who celebrated her 80th birthday by

a ball, and is supposed at that ripe age to have made an offer of marriage to a young actor. She died in May, 1821, leaving all that she could dispose of to a nephew of Piozzi's, who had been naturalised in England.

Meanwhile Johnson was rapidly approaching the grave. His old inmates, Levett and Miss Williams, had gone before him; Goldsmith and Garrick and Beauclerk had become memories of the past; and the gloom gathered thickly around him. The old man clung to life with pathetic earnestness. Though life had been often melancholy, he never affected to conceal the horror with which he regarded death. He frequently declared that death must be dreadful to every reasonable man. "Death, my dear, is very dreadful," he says simply in a letter to Lucy Porter in the last year of his life. Still later he shocked a pious friend by admitting that the fear oppressed him. Dr. Adams tried the ordinary consolation of the divine goodness, and went so far as to suggest that hell might not imply much positive suffering. Johnson's religious views were of a different colour. "I am afraid," he said, "I may be one of those who shall be damned." "What do you mean by damned?" asked Adams. Johnson replied passionately and loudly, "Sent to hell, sir, and punished everlastingly." Remonstrances only deepened his melancholy, and he silenced his friends by exclaiming in gloomy agitation, "I'll have no more on't!" Often in these last years he was heard muttering to himself the passionate complaint of Claudio, "Ah, but to die and go we know not whither!" At other times he was speaking of some lost friend, and saying, "Poor man—and then he died!" The peculiar horror of death, which seems to indicate a tinge of insanity, was combined with utter fearlessness of pain. He called to the surgeons to cut deeper when performing a painful operation, and shortly before his death inflicted such wounds upon himself in hopes of obtaining relief as, very erroneously, to suggest the idea of suicide. Whilst his strength remained, he endeavoured to disperse melancholy by some of the old methods. In the winter of 1783-4 he got together the few surviving members of the old Ivy Lane Club, which had flourished when he was composing the *Dictionary;* but the old place of meeting had vanished, most of the original members were dead, and the gathering can have been but melancholy. He started another club at the Essex Head, whose members were to meet twice a week, with the modest fine of threepence for non-attendance. It appears to have included a rather "strange mixture" of people, and thereby to have given some scandal to Sir John Hawkins and even to Reynolds. They thought that his craving for society, increased by his loss of Streatham, was leading him to undignified concessions.

Amongst the members of the club, however, were such men as Horsley and Windham. Windham seems to have attracted more personal regard than most politicians, by a generous warmth of enthusiasm not too common in the class. In politics he was an ardent disciple of Burke's whom he afterwards followed in his sep-

aration from the new Whigs. But, though adhering to the principles which Johnson detested, he knew, like his preceptor, how to win Johnson's warmest regard. He was the most eminent of the younger generation who now looked up to Johnson as a venerable relic from the past. Another was young Burke, that very priggish and silly young man as he seems to have been, whose loss, none the less, broke the tender heart of his father. Friendships, now more interesting, were those with two of the most distinguished authoresses of the day. One of them was Hannah More, who was about this time coming to the conclusion that the talents which had gained her distinction in the literary and even in the dramatic world, should be consecrated to less secular employment. Her vivacity during the earlier years of their acquaintance exposed her to an occasional rebuff. "She does not gain upon me, sir; I think her empty-headed," was one of his remarks; and it was to her that he said, according to Mrs. Thrale, though Boswell reports a softened version of the remark, that she should "consider what her flattery was worth, before she choked him with it." More frequently, he seems to have repaid it in kind. "There was no name in poetry," he said, "which might not be glad to own her poem"—the *Bas Bleu.* Certainly Johnson did not stick at trifles in intercourse with his female friends. He was delighted, shortly before his death, to "gallant it about" with her at Oxford, and in serious moments showed a respectful regard for her merits. Hannah More, who thus sat at the feet of Johnson, encouraged the juvenile ambition of Macaulay, and did not die till the historian had grown into manhood and fame. The other friendship noticed was with Fanny Burney, who also lived to our own time. Johnson's affection for this daughter of his friend seems to have been amongst the tenderest of his old age. When she was first introduced to him at the Thrales, she was overpowered and indeed had her head a little turned by flattery of the most agreeable kind that an author can receive. The "great literary Leviathan" showed himself to have the recently published *Evelina* at his fingers' ends. He quoted, and almost acted passages. "La! Polly!" he exclaimed in a pert feminine accent, "only think! Miss has danced with a lord!" How many modern readers can assign its place to that quotation, or answer the question which poor Boswell asked in despair and amidst general ridicule for his ignorance, "What is a Brangton?" There is something pleasant in the enthusiasm with which men like Johnson and Burke welcomed the literary achievements of the young lady, whose first novels seem to have made a sensation almost as lively as that produced by Miss Bronté, and far superior to anything that fell to the lot of Miss Austen. Johnson seems also to have regarded her with personal affection. He had a tender interview with her shortly before his death; he begged her with solemn energy to remember him in her prayers; he apologised pathetically for being unable to see her, as his weakness increased; and sent her tender messages from his deathbed.

As the end drew near, Johnson accepted the inevitable like a

man. After spending most of the latter months of 1784 in the country with the friends who, after the loss of the Thrales, could give him most domestic comfort, he came back to London to die. He made his will, and settled a few matters of business, and was pleased to be told that he would be buried in Westminster Abbey. He uttered a few words of solemn advice to those who came near him, and took affecting leave of his friends. Langton, so warmly loved, was in close attendance. Johnson said to him tenderly, *Te teneam moriens deficiente manu.* Windham broke from political occupations to sit by the dying man; once Langton found Burke sitting by his bedside with three or four friends. "I am afraid," said Burke, "that so many of us must be oppressive to you." "No, sir, it is not so," replied Johnson, "and I must be in a wretched state indeed when your company would not be a delight to me." "My dear sir," said Burke, with a breaking voice, "you have always been too good to me;" and parted from his old friend for the last time. Of Reynolds, he begged three things: to forgive a debt of thirty pounds, to read the Bible, and never to paint on Sundays. A few flashes of the old humour broke through. He said of a man who sat up with him: "Sir, the fellow's an idiot; he's as awkward as a turnspit when first put into the wheel, and as sleepy as a dormouse." His last recorded words were to a young lady who had begged for his blessing: "God bless you, my dear." The same day, December 13th, 1784, he gradually sank and died peacefully. He was laid in the Abbey by the side of Goldsmith, and the playful prediction has been amply fulfilled:—

Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur istis.

The names of many greater writers are inscribed upon the walls of Westminster Abbey; but scarcely any one lies there whose heart was more acutely responsive during life to the deepest and tenderest of human emotions. In visiting that strange gathering of departed heroes and statesmen and philanthropists and poets, there are many whose words and deeds have a far greater influence upon our imaginations; but there are very few whom, when all has been said, we can love so heartily as Samuel Johnson.

CHAPTER VI.

JOHNSON'S WRITINGS.

It remains to speak of Johnson's position in literature. For reasons sufficiently obvious, few men whose lives have been devoted to letters for an equal period, have left behind them such scanty and inadequate remains. Johnson, as we have seen, worked only under the pressure of circumstances; a very small proportion of his latter life was devoted to literary employment. The working hours of his earlier years were spent for the most part in productions which can hardly be called literary. Seven years were devoted to the *Dictionary*, which, whatever its merits, could be a book only in the material sense of the word, and was of course destined to be soon superseded. Much of his hack-work has doubtless passed into oblivion, and though the ordinary relic-worship has gathered together fragments enough to fill twelve decent octavo volumes (to which may be added the two volumes of parliamentary reports), the part which can be called alive may be compressed into very moderate compass. Johnson may be considered as a poet, an essayist, a pamphleteer, a traveller, a critic, and a biographer. Among his poems, the two imitations of Juvenal, especially the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, and a minor fragment or two, probably deserve more respect than would be conceded to them by adherents of modern schools. His most ambitious work, *Irene*, can be read by men in whom a sense of duty has been abnormally developed. Among the two hundred and odd essays of the *Rambler*, there is a fair proportion which will deserve, but will hardly obtain, respectful attention. *Rasselas*, one of the philosophical tales popular in the last century, gives the essence of much of the *Rambler* in a different form, and to these may be added the essay upon Soame Jenyns, which deals with the same absorbing question of human happiness. The political pamphlets, and the *Journey to the Hebrides*, have a certain historical interest; but are otherwise readable only in particular passages. Much of his criticism is pretty nearly obsolete; but the child of his old age —the *Lives of the Poets*—a book in which criticism and biography are combined, is an admirable performance in spite of serious defects. It is the work that best reflects his mind, and intelligent readers who have once made its acquaintance, will be apt to turn it into a familiar companion.

If it is easy to assign the causes which limited the quantity of Johnson's work, it is more curious to inquire what was the quality which once gained for it so much authority, and which now seems to have so far lost its savour. The peculiar style which is associated with Johnson's name must count for something in both processes. The mannerism is strongly marked, and of course offensive; for by "mannerism," as I understand the word, is meant the repetition of certain forms of language in obedience to blind habit and without reference to their propriety in the particular case. Johnson's sentences seem to be contorted, as his gigantic limbs used to twitch, by a kind of mechanical spasmodic action. The most obvious peculiarity is the tendency which he noticed himself, to "use too big words and too many of them." He had to explain to Miss Reynolds that the Shakesperian line,—

> You must borrow me Garagantua's mouth,

had been applied to him because he used "big words, which require the mouth of a giant to pronounce them." It was not, however, the mere bigness of the words that distinguished his style, but a peculiar love of putting the abstract for the concrete, of using awkward inversions, and of balancing his sentences in a monotonous rhythm, which gives the appearance, as it sometimes corresponds to the reality, of elaborate logical discrimination. With all its faults the style has the merits of masculine directness. The inversions are not such as to complicate the construction. As Boswell remarks, he never uses a parenthesis; and his style, though ponderous and wearisome, is as transparent as the smarter snipsnap of Macaulay.

This singular mannerism appears in his earliest writings; it is most marked at the time of the *Rambler;* whilst in the *Lives of the Poets*, although I think that the trick of inversion has become commoner, the other peculiarities have been so far softened as (in my judgment, at least), to be inoffensive. It is perhaps needless to give examples of a tendency which marks almost every page of his writing. A passage or two from the *Rambler* may illustrate the quality of the style, and the oddity of the effect produced, when it is applied to topics of a trivial kind. The author of the *Rambler* is supposed to receive a remonstrance upon his excessive gravity from the lively Flirtilla, who wishes him to write in defence of masquerades. Conscious of his own incapacity, he applies to a man of "high reputation in gay life;" who, on the fifth perusal of Flirtilla's letter breaks into a rapture, and declares that he is ready to devote himself to her service. Here is part of the apostrophe put into the mouth of this brilliant rake. "Behold, Flirtilla, at thy feet a man grown gray in the study of those noble arts by which right and wrong may be confounded; by which reason may be blinded, when we have a mind to escape from her inspection, and caprice and appetite instated in uncontrolled command and boundless dominion! Such a casuist may surely engage with cer-

tainty of success in vindication of an entertainment which in an instant gives confidence to the timorous and kindles ardour in the cold, an entertainment where the vigilance of jealousy has so often been clouded, and the virgin is set free from the necessity of languishing in silence; where all the outworks of chastity are at once demolished; where the heart is laid open without a blush; where bashfulness may survive virtue, and no wish is crushed under the frown of modesty."

Here is another passage, in which Johnson is speaking upon a topic more within his proper province; and which contains sound sense under its weight of words. A man, he says, who reads a printed book, is often contented to be pleased without critical examination. "But," he adds, "if the same man be called to consider the merit of a production yet unpublished, he brings an imagination heated with objections to passages which he has never yet heard; he invokes all the powers of criticism, and stores his memory with Taste and Grace, Purity and Delicacy, Manners and Unities, sounds which having been once uttered by those that understood them, have been since re-echoed without meaning, and kept up to the disturbance of the world by constant repercussion from one coxcomb to another. He considers himself as obliged to show by some proof of his abilities, that he is not consulted to no purpose, and therefore watches every opening for objection, and looks round for every opportunity to propose some specious alteration. Such opportunities a very small degree of sagacity will enable him to find, for in every work of imagination, the disposition of parts, the insertion of incidents, and use of decorations may be varied in a thousand ways with equal propriety; and, as in things nearly equal that will always seem best to every man which he himself produces, the critic, whose business is only to propose without the care of execution, can never want the satisfaction of believing that he has suggested very important improvements, nor the power of enforcing his advice by arguments, which, as they appear convincing to himself, either his kindness or his vanity will press obstinately and importunately, without suspicion that he may possibly judge too hastily in favour of his own advice or inquiry whether the advantage of the new scheme be proportionate to the labour." We may still notice a "repercussion" of words from one coxcomb to another; though somehow the words have been changed or translated.

Johnson's style is characteristic of the individual and of the epoch. The preceding generation had exhibited the final triumph of common sense over the pedantry of a decaying scholasticism. The movements represented by Locke's philosophy, by the rationalising school in theology, and by the so-called classicism of Pope and his followers, are different phases of the same impulse. The quality valued above all others in philosophy, literature, and art was clear, bright, common sense. To expel the mystery which had served as a cloak for charlatans was the great aim of the time, and the method was to appeal from the professors of exploded techni-

calities to the judgment of cultivated men of the world. Berkeley places his Utopia in happy climes,—

> Where nature guides, and virtue rules,
> *Where men shall not impose for truth and sense*
> *The pedantry of courts and schools.*

Simplicity, clearness, directness are, therefore, the great virtues of thought and style. Berkeley, Addison, Pope, and Swift are the great models of such excellence in various departments of literature.

In the succeeding generation we become aware of a certain leaven of dissatisfaction with the æsthetic and intellectual code thus inherited. The supremacy of common sense, the superlative importance of clearness, is still fully acknowledged, but there is a growing undertone of dissent in form and substance. Attempts are made to restore philosophical conceptions assailed by Locke and his followers; the rationalism of the deistic or semi-deistic writers is declared to be superficial: their optimistic theories disregard the dark side of nature, and provide no sufficient utterance for the sadness caused by the contemplation of human suffering; and the polished monotony of Pope's verses begins to pall upon those who shall tread in his steps. Some daring sceptics are even inquiring whether he is a poet at all. And simultaneously, though Addison is still a kind of sacred model, the best prose writers are beginning to aim at a more complex structure of sentence, fitted for the expression of a wider range of thought and emotion.

Johnson, though no conscious revolutionist, shares this growing discontent. The *Spectator* is written in the language of the drawing-room and the coffee-house. Nothing is ever said which might not pass in conversation between a couple of "wits," with, at most, some graceful indulgence in passing moods of solemn or tender sentiment. Johnson, though devoted to society in his own way, was anything but a producer of small talk. Society meant to him an escape from the gloom which beset him whenever he was abandoned to his thoughts. Neither his education nor the manners acquired in Grub Street had qualified him to be an observer of those lighter foibles which were touched by Addison with so dexterous a hand. When he ventures upon such topics he flounders dreadfully, and rather reminds us of an artist who should attempt to paint miniatures with a mop. No man, indeed, took more of interest in what is called the science of human nature; and, when roused by the stimulus of argument, he could talk, as has been shown, with almost unrivalled vigour and point. But his favourite topics are the deeper springs of character, rather than superficial peculiarities: and his vigorous sayings are concentrated essence of strong sense and deep feeling, not dainty epigrams or graceful embodiments of delicate observation. Johnson was not, like some contemporary antiquarians, a systematic student of the English literature of the preceding centuries, but he had a strong affection for some of its chief masterpieces. Burton's *Anatomy of Melan-*

choly was, he declared, the only book which ever got him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished. Sir Thomas Browne was another congenial writer, who is supposed to have had some influence upon his style. He never seems to have directly imitated any one, though some nonsense has been talked about his "forming a style;" but it is probable that he felt a closer affinity to those old scholars, with their elaborate and ornate language and their deep and solemn tone of sentiment, than to the brilliant but comparatively superficial writers of Queen Anne's time. He was, one may say, a scholar of the old type, forced by circumstances upon the world, but always retaining a sympathy for the scholar's life and temper. Accordingly, his style acquired something of the old elaboration, though the attempt to conform to the canons of a later age renders the structure disagreeably monotonous. His tendency to pomposity is not redeemed by the *naïveté* and spontaneity of his masters.

The inferiority of Johnson's written to his spoken utterances is indicative of his divided life. There are moments at which his writing takes the terse, vigorous tone of his talk. In his letters, such as those to Chesterfield and Macpherson, and in occasional passages of his pamphlets, we see that he could be pithy enough when he chose to descend from his Latinised abstractions to good concrete English; but that is only when he becomes excited. His face when in repose, we are told, appeared to be almost imbecile; he was constantly sunk in reveries, from which he was only roused by a challenge to conversation. In his writings, for the most part, we seem to be listening to the reverie rather than the talk; we are overhearing a soliloquy in his study, not a vigorous discussion over the twentieth cup of tea; he is not fairly put upon his mettle, and is content to expound without enforcing. We seem to see a man, heavy-eyed, ponderous in his gestures, like some huge mechanism which grinds out a ponderous tissue of verbiage as heavy as it is certainly solid.

The substance corresponds to the style. Johnson has something in common with the fashionable pessimism of modern times. No sentimentalist of to-day could be more convinced that life is in the main miserable. It was his favourite theory, according to Mrs. Thrale, that all human action was prompted by the "vacuity of life." Men act solely in the hope of escaping from themselves. Evil, as a follower of Schopenhauer would assert, is the positive, and good merely the negative of evil. All desire is at bottom an attempt to escape from pain. The doctrine neither resulted from, nor generated, a philosophical theory in Johnson's case, and was in the main a generalisation of his own experience. Not the less, the aim of most of his writing is to express this sentiment in one form or other. He differs, indeed, from most modern sentimentalists, in having the most hearty contempt for useless whining. If he dwells upon human misery, it is because he feels that it is as futile to join with the optimist in ignoring, as with the pessimist in howling over the evil. We are in a sad world, full of pain, but we

have to make the best of it. Stubborn patience and hard work are the sole remedies, or rather the sole means of temporary escape. Much of the *Rambler* is occupied with variations upon this theme, and expresses the kind of dogged resolution with which he would have us plod through this weary world. Take for example this passage :—" The controversy about the reality of external evils is now at an end. That life has many miseries, and that those miseries are sometimes at least equal to all the powers of fortitude is now universally confessed; and, therefore, it is useful to consider not only how we may escape them, but by what means those which either the accidents of affairs or the infirmities of nature must bring upon us may be mitigated and lightened, and how we may make those hours less wretched which the condition of our present existence will not allow to be very happy.

" The cure for the greatest part of human miseries is not radical, but palliative. Infelicity is involved in corporeal nature, and interwoven with our being; all attempts, therefore, to decline it wholly are useless and vain; the armies of pain send their arrows against us on every side, the choice is only between those which are more or less sharp, or tinged with poison of greater or less malignity; and the strongest armour which reason can supply will only blunt their points, but cannot repel them.

" The great remedy which Heaven has put in our hands is patience, by which, though we cannot lessen the torments of the body, we can in a great measure preserve the peace of the mind, and shall suffer only the natural and genuine force of an evil, without heightening its acrimony or prolonging its effects."

It is hardly desirable for a moralist to aim at originality in his precepts. We must be content if he enforces old truths in such a manner as to convince us of the depth and sincerity of his feeling. Johnson, it must be confessed, rather abuses the moralist's privilege of being commonplace. He descants not unfrequently upon propositions so trite that even the most earnest enforcement can give them little interest. With all drawbacks, however, the moralising is the best part of the *Rambler*. Many of the papers follow the precedent set by Addison in the *Spectator*, but without Addison's felicity. Like Addison, he indulges in allegory, which, in his hands, becomes unendurably frigid and clumsy; he tries light social satire, and is fain to confess that we can spy a beard under the muffler of his feminine characters; he treats us to criticism which, like Addison's, goes upon exploded principles, but unlike Addison's, is apt to be almost wilfully outrageous. His odd remarks upon Milton's versification are the worst example of this weakness. The result is what one might expect from the attempt of a writer without an ear to sit in judgment upon the greatest master of harmony in the language.

These defects have consigned the *Rambler* to the dustiest shelves of libraries, an account for the wonder expressed by such a critic as M. Taine at the English love of Johnson. Certainly if that love were nourished, as he seems to fancy, by assiduous study

of the *Rambler*, it would be a curious phenomenon. And yet with all its faults, the reader who can plod through its pages will at least feel respect for the author. It is not unworthy of the man whose great lesson is "clear your mind of cant;"* who felt most deeply the misery of the world, but from the bottom of his heart despised querulous and sentimental complaints on one side, and optimist glasses upon the other. To him, as to some others of his temperament, the affectation of looking at the bright side of things seems to have presented itself as the bitterest of mockeries; and nothing would tempt him to let fine words pass themselves off for genuine sense. Here are some remarks upon the vanity in which some authors seek for consolation, which may illustrate this love of realities and conclude our quotations from the *Rambler*.

"By such acts of voluntary delusion does every man endeavour to conceal his own unimportance from himself. It is long before we are convinced of the small proportion which every individual bears to the collective body of mankind; or learn how few can be interested in the fortune of any single man; how little vacancy is left in the world for any new object of attention; to how small extent the brightest blaze of merit can be spread amidst the mists of business and of folly; and how soon it is clouded by the intervention of other novelties. Not only the writer of books, but the commander of armies, and the deliverer of nations, will easily outlive all noisy and popular reputation: he may be celebrated for a time by the public voice, but his actions and his name will soon be considered as remote and unaffecting, and be rarely mentioned but by those whose alliance gives them some vanity to gratify by frequent commemoration. It seems not to be sufficiently considered how little renown can be admitted in the world. Mankind are kept perpetually busy by their fears or desires, and have not more leisure from their own affairs than to acquaint themselves with the accidents of the current day. Engaged in contriving some refuge from calamity, or in shortening their way to some new possession, they seldom suffer their thoughts to wander to the past or future; none but a few solitary students have leisure to inquire into the claims of ancient heroes or sages; and names which hoped to range over kingdoms and continents shrink at last into cloisters and colleges. Nor is it certain that even of these dark and narrow habitations, these last retreats of fame, the possession will be long kept. Of men devoted to literature very few extend their views beyond some particular science, and the greater part seldom inquire, even in their own profession, for any authors but those whom the present mode of study happens to force upon their notice; they desire not to fill their minds with unfashionable knowledge, but contentedly

* Of this well-known sentiment it may be said, as of some other familiar quotations, that its direct meaning has been slightly modified in use. The emphasis is changed. Johnson's words were "Clear your *mind* of cant. You may talk as other people do; you may say to a man, sir, I am your humble servant; you are *not* his most humble servant. . . . You may *talk* in this manner; it is a mode of talking in society; but don't *think* foolishly."

resign to oblivion those books which they now find censured or neglected."

The most remarkable of Johnson's utterances upon his favourite topic of the Vanity of Human Wishes is the story of *Rasselas*. The plan of the book is simple, and recalls certain parts of Voltaire's simultaneous but incomparably more brilliant attack upon Optimism in *Candide*. There is supposed to be a happy valley in Abyssinia where the royal princes are confined in total seclusion, but with ample supplies for every conceivable want. Rasselas, who has been thus educated, becomes curious as to the outside world, and at last makes his escape with his sister, her attendant, and the ancient sage and poet, Imlac. Under Imlac's guidance they survey life and manners in various stations; they make the acquaintance of philosophers, statesmen, men of the world, and recluses; they discuss the results of their experience pretty much in the style of the *Rambler;* they agree to pronounce the sentence "Vanity of Vanities!" and finally, in a "conclusion where nothing is concluded," they resolve to return to the happy valley. The book is little more than a set of essays upon life, with just story enough to hold it together. It is wanting in those brilliant flashes of epigram, which illustrate Voltaire's pages so as to blind some readers to its real force of sentiment, and yet it leaves a peculiar and powerful impression upon the reader.

The general tone may be collected from a few passages. Here is a fragment, the conclusion of which is perhaps the most familiar of quotations from Johnson's writings. Imlac in narrating his life describes his attempts to become a poet.

"The business of a poet," said Imlac, "is to examine not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances; he does not number the streaks of the tulip or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features as recall the original to every mind; and must neglect the minute discriminations which one may have remarked, and another have neglected for those characteristics which are alike obvious to vigilance and carelessness."

"But the knowledge of nature is only half the task of a poet; he must be acquainted likewise with all the modes of life. His character requires that he estimate the happiness and misery of every condition; observe the power of all the passions in all their combinations, and know the changes of the human mind as they are modified by various institutions, and accidental influences of climate or custom, from the sprightliness of infancy to the despondency of decrepitude. He must divest himself of the prejudices of his age or country; he must consider right and wrong in their abstracted and invariable state; he must disregard present laws and opinions, and rise to general and transcendental truths, which will always be the same; he must therefore content himself with the slow progress of his name: contemn the applause of his own time, and commit his claims to the justice of posterity. He must write

as the interpreter of nature and the legislator of mankind, and consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners of future generations, as a being superior to time and place.

"His labours are not yet at an end; he must know many languages and many sciences; and that his style may be worthy of his thoughts, must by incessant practice familiarise to himself every delicacy of speech and grace of harmony."

Imlac now felt the enthusiastic fit and was proceeding to aggrandise his profession, when the prince cried out, "Enough, thou hast convinced me that no human being can ever be a poet."

Indeed, Johnson's conception of poetry is not the one which is now fashionable, and which would rather seem to imply that philosophical power and moral sensibility are so far disqualifications to the true poet.

Here, again, is a view of the superfine system of moral philosophy. A meeting of learned men is discussing the ever-recurring problem of happiness, and one of them speaks as follows:—

"The way to be happy is to live according to nature, in obedience to that universal and unalterable law with which every heart is originally impressed; which is not written on it by precept, but engraven by destiny, not instilled by education, but infused at our nativity. He that lives according to nature will suffer nothing from the delusions of hope, or importunities of desire; he will receive and reject with equability of temper, and act or suffer as the reason of things shall alternately prescribe. Other men may amuse themselves with subtle definitions or intricate ratiocinations. Let him learn to be wise by easier means: let him observe the hind of the forest, and the linnet of the grove; let him consider the life of animals whose motions are regulated by instinct; they obey their guide and are happy.

"Let us, therefore, at length cease to dispute, and learn to live; throw away the incumbrance of precepts, which they who utter them with so much pride and pomp do not understand, and carry with us this simple and intelligible maxim, that deviation from nature is deviation from happiness."

The prince modestly inquires what is the precise meaning of the advice just given.

"When I find young men so humble and so docile," said the philosopher, "I can deny them no information which my studies have enabled me to afford. To live according to nature, is to act always with due regard to the fitness arising from the relations and qualities of causes and effects, to concur with the great and unchangeable scheme of universal felicity; to co-operate with the general disposition and tendency of the present system of things.

"The prince soon found that this was one of the sages, whom he should understand less as he heard him longer."

Here, finally, is a characteristic reflection upon the right mode of meeting sorrow.

"The state of a mind oppressed with a sudden calamity," said Imlac, "is like that of the fabulous inhabitants of the new created

earth, who, when the first night came upon them, supposed that day would never return. When the clouds of sorrow gather over us, we see nothing beyond them, nor can imagine how they will be dispelled; yet a new day succeeded to the night, and sorrow is never long without a dawn of ease. But they who restrain themselves from receiving comfort, do as the savages would have done, had they put out their eyes when it was dark. Our minds, like our bodies, are in continual flux; something is hourly lost, and something acquired. To lose much at once is inconvenient to either, but while the vital powers remain uninjured, nature will find the means of reparation.

"Distance has the same effect on the mind as on the eye, and while we glide along the stream of time, whatever we leave behind us is always lessening, and that which we approach increasing in magnitude. Do not suffer life to stagnate; it will grow muddy for want of motion; commit yourself again to the current of the world; Pekuah will vanish by degrees; you will meet in your way some other favourite, or learn to diffuse yourself in general conversation."

In one respect *Rasselas* is curiously contrasted with *Candide*. Voltaire's story is aimed at the doctrine of theological optimism, and, whether that doctrine be well or ill understood, has therefore an openly sceptical tendency. Johnson, to whom nothing could be more abhorrent than an alliance with any assailant of orthodoxy, draws no inference from his pessimism. He is content to state the fact of human misery without perplexing himself with the resulting problem as to the final cause of human existence. If the question had been explicitly brought before him, he would, doubtless, have replied that the mystery was insoluble. To answer either in the sceptical or the optimistic sense was equally presumptuous. Johnson's religious beliefs in fact were not such as to suggest that kind of comfort which is to be obtained by explaining away the existence of evil. If he, too, would have said that in some sense all must be for the best in a world ruled by a perfect Creator, the sense must be one which would allow of the eternal misery of indefinite multitudes of his creatures.

But, in truth, it was characteristic of Johnson to turn away his mind from such topics. He was interested in ethical speculations, but on the practical side, in the application to life, not in the philosophy on which it might be grounded. In that direction he could see nothing but a "milking of the bull"—a fruitless or rather a pernicious waste of intellect. An intense conviction of the supreme importance of a moral guidance in this difficult world, made him abhor any rash inquiries by which the basis of existing authority might be endangered.

This sentiment is involved in many of those prejudices which have been so much, and in some sense justifiably ridiculed. Man has been wretched and foolish since the race began, and will be till it ends; one chorus of lamentation has ever been rising, in countless dialects but with a single meaning; the plausible schemes of philosophers give no solution to the everlasting riddle; the nos-

trums of politicians touch only the surface of the deeply-rooted evil; it is folly to be querulous, and as silly to fancy that men are growing worse, as that they are much better than they used to be. The evils under which we suffer are not skin deep, to be eradicated by changing the old physicians for new quacks. What is to be done under such conditions, but to hold fast as vigorously as we can to the rules of life and faith which have served our ancestors, and which, whatever their justifications, are at least the only consolation, because they supply the only guidance through this labyrinth of troubles? Macaulay has ridiculed Johnson for what he takes to be the ludicrous inconsistency of his intense political prejudice, combined with his assertion of the indifference of all forms of government. "If," says Macaulay, "the difference between two forms of government be not worth half a guinea, it is not easy to see how Whiggism can be viler than Toryism, or the Crown can have too little power." The answer is surely obvious. Whiggism is vile, according to the doctor's phrase, because Whiggism is a "negation of all principle;" it is in his view, not so much the preference of one form to another, as an attack upon the vital condition of all government. He called Burke a "bottomless Whig" in this sense, implying that Whiggism meant anarchy; and in the next generation a good many people were led, rightly or wrongly, to agree with him by the experience of the French revolution.

This dogged conservatism has both its value and its grotesque side. When Johnson came to write political pamphlets in his later years, and to deal with subjects little familiar to his mind, the results were grotesque enough. Loving authority, and holding one authority to be as good as another, he defended with uncompromising zeal the most preposterous and tyrannical measures. The pamphlets against the Wilkite agitators and the American rebels are little more than a huge "rhinoceros" snort of contempt against all who are fools enough or wicked enough to promote war and disturbance in order to change one form of authority for another. Here is a characteristic passage, giving his view of the value of such demonstrators:—

"The progress of a petition is well known. An ejected placeman goes down to his county or his borough, tells his friends of his inability to serve them and his constituents, of the corruption of the government. His friends readily understand that he who can get nothing, will have nothing to give. They agree to proclaim a meeting. Meat and drink are plentifully provided, a crowd is easily brought together, and those who think that they know the reason of the meeting undertake to tell those who know it not. Ale and clamour unite their powers; the crowd, condensed and heated, begin to ferment with the leaven of sedition. All see a thousand evils, though they cannot suow them, and grow impatient for a remedy, though they know not what.

"A speech is then made by the Cicero of the day: he says much and suppresses more, and credit is equally given to what he tells and what he conceals. The petition is heard and universally

approved. Those who are sober enough to write, add their names, and the rest would sign it if they could.

"Every man goes home and tells his neighbour of the glories of the day; how he was consulted, and what he advised; how he was invited into the great room, where his lordship called him by his name; how he was caressed by Sir Francis, Sir Joseph, and Sir George; how he ate turtle and venison, and drank unanimity to the three brothers.

"The poor loiterer, whose shop had confined him or whose wife had locked him up, hears the tale of luxury with envy, and at last inquires what was their petition. Of the petition nothing is remembered by the narrator, but that it spoke much of fears and apprehensions and something very alarming, but that he is sure it is against the government.

"The other is convinced that it must be right, and wishes he had been there, for he loves wine and venison, and resolves as long as he lives to be against the government.

"The petition is then handed from town to town, and from house to house; and wherever it comes, the inhabitants flock together that they may see that which must be sent to the king. Names are easily collected. One man signs because he hates the papists; another because he has vowed destruction to the turnpikes; one because it will vex the parson; another because he owes his landlord nothing; one because he is rich; another because he is poor; one to show that he is not afraid; and another to show that he can write."

The only writing in which we see a distinct reflection of Johnson's talk is the *Lives of the Poets*. The excellence of that book is of the same kind as the excellence of his conversation. Johnson wrote it under pressure, and it has suffered from his characteristic indolence. Modern authors would fill as many pages as Johnson has filled lines, with the biographies of some of his heroes. By industriously sweeping together all the rubbish which is in any way connected with the great man, by elaborately discussing the possible significance of infinitesimal bits of evidence, and by disquisition upon general principles or the whole mass of contemporary literature, it is easy to swell volumes to any desired extent. The result is sometimes highly interesting and valuable, as it is sometimes a new contribution to the dust-heaps; but in any case the design is something quite different from Johnson's. He has left much to be supplied and corrected by later scholars. His aim is simply to give a vigorous summary of the main facts of his heroes' lives, a pithy analysis of their character, and a short criticism of their productions. The strong sense which is everywhere displayed, the massive style, which is yet easier and less combrous than in his earlier work, and the uprightness and independence of the judgments, make the book agreeable even where we are most inclined to dissent from its conclusions.

The criticism is that of a school which has died out under the great revolution of modern taste. The booksellers decided that

English poetry began for their purposes with Cowley, and Johnson has, therefore, nothing to say about some of the greatest names in our literature The loss is little to be regretted, since the biographical part of earlier memoirs must have been scanty, and the criticism inappreciative. Johnson, it may be said, like most of his contemporaries, considered poetry almost exclusively from the didactic and logical point of view. He always inquires what is the moral of a work of art. If he does not precisely ask "what it proves," he pays excessive attention to the logical solidity and coherence of its sentiments. He condemns not only insincerity and affectation of feeling, but all such poetic imagery as does not correspond to the actual prosaic belief of the writer. For the purely musical effects of poetry he has little or no feeling, and allows little deviation from the alternate long and short syllables neatly bound in Pope's couplets.

To many readers this would imply that Johnson omits precisely the poetic element in poetry. I must be here content to say that in my opinion it implies rather a limitation than a fundamental error. Johnson errs in supposing that his logical tests are at all adequate; but it is, I think, a still greater error to assume that poetry has no connexion, because it has not this kind of connexion, with philosophy. His criticism has always a meaning, and in the case of works belonging to his own school a very sound meaning. When he is speaking of other poetry, we can only reply that his remarks may be true, but that they are not to the purpose.

The remarks on the poetry of Dryden, Addison, and Pope are generally excellent, and always give the genuine expression of an independent judgment. Whoever thinks for himself, and says plainly what he thinks, has some merit as a critic. This, it is true, is about all that can be said for such criticism as that on *Lycidas*, which is a delicious example of the wrong way of applying strong sense to inappropriate topics. Nothing can be truer in a sense, and nothing less relevant.

"In this poem," he says, "there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting; whatever images it can supply are easily exhausted, and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey that they studied together, it is easy to suppose how much he must miss the companion of his labours and the partner of his discoveries; but what image of tenderness can be excited by these lines?—

> We drove afield, and both together heard
> What time the gray fly winds her sultry horn,
> Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night.

We know that they never drove a-field and had no flocks to batten; and though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical, the true meaning is so uncertain and remote that it is never sought, because it cannot be known when it is found.

Among the flocks and copses and flowers appear the heathen deities: Jove and Phœbus, Neptune and Æolus, with a long train of mythological imagery such as a college easily supplies. Nothing can less display knowledge or less exercise invention than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, and must now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his skill in piping; how one god asks another god what has become of Lycidae, and neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no sympathy; he who thus praises will confer no honour."

This is of course utterly outrageous, and yet much of it is undeniably true. To explain why, in spite of truth, *Lycidas* is a wonderful poem, would be to go pretty deeply into the theory of poetic expression. Most critics prefer simply to shriek, being at any rate safe from the errors of independent judgment.

The general effect of the book, however, is not to be inferred from this or some other passages of antiquated and eccentric criticism. It is the shrewd sense everywhere cropping up which is really delightful. The keen remarks upon life and character, though, perhaps, rather too severe in tone, are worthy of a vigorous mind, stored with much experience of many classes, and braced by constant exercise in the conversational arena. Passages everywhere abound which, though a little more formal in expression, have the forcible touch of his best conversational sallies. Some of the prejudices, which are expressed more pithily in *Boswell*, are defended by a reasoned exposition in the *Lives*. Sentence is passed with the true judicial air; and if he does not convince us of his complete impartiality, he at least bases his decisions upon solid and worthy grounds. It would be too much, for example, to expect that Johnson should sympathise with the grand republicanism of Milton, or pardon a man who defended the execution of the blessed Martyr. He failed, therefore, to satisfy the ardent admirers of the great poet. Yet his judgment is not harsh or ungenerous, but, at worst, the judgment of a man striving to be just, in spite of some inevitable want of sympathy.

The quality of Johnson's incidental remarks may be inferred from one or two brief extracts. Here is an observation which Johnson must have had many chances of verifying. Speaking of Dryden's money difficulties, he says, "It is well known that he seldom lives frugally who lives by chance. Hope is always liberal, and they that trust her promises, make little scruple of revelling to-day on the profits of the morrow."

Here is another shrewd comment upon the compliments paid to Halifax, of whom Pope says in the character of Bufo,—

> Fed with soft dedications all day long,
> Horace and he went hand and hand in song.

"To charge all unmerited praise with the guilt of flattery, or to suppose that the economist always knows and feels the falsehoods of his assertions, is surely to discover great ignorance of human

nature and of human life. In determinations, depending not on rules, but on reference and comparison, judgment is always in some degree subject to affection. Very near to admiration is the wish to admire.

"Every man willingly gives value to the praise which he receives, and considers the sentence passed in his favour as the sentence of discernment. We admire in a friend that understanding that selected us for confidence; we admire more in a patron that bounty which, instead of scattering bounty indiscriminately, directed it to us; and if the patron be an author, those performances which gratitude forbids us to blame, affection will easily dispose us to exalt.

"To these prejudices, hardly culpable, interest adds a power always operating, though not always, because not willingly, perceived. The modesty of praise gradually wears away; and, perhaps, the pride of patronage may be in time so increased that modest praise will no longer please.

"Many a blandishment was practised upon Halifax, which he would never have known had he no other attractions than those of his poetry, of which a short time has withered the beauties. It would now be esteemed no honour by a contributor to the monthly bundles of verses, to be told that, in strains either familiar or solemn, he sings like Halifax."

I will venture to make a longer quotation from the life of Pope, which gives, I think, a good impression of his manner:—

"Of his social qualities, if an estimate be made from his letters, an opinion too favourable cannot easily be formed; they exhibit a perpetual and unclouded effulgence of general benevolence and particular fondness. There is nothing but liberality, gratitude, constancy, and tenderness. It has been so long said as to be commonly believed, that the true characters of men may be found in their letters, and that he who writes to his friends lays his heart open before him.

"But the truth is, that such were the simple friendships of the Golden Age, and are now the friendships only of children. Very few can boast of hearts which they dare lay open to themselves, and of which, by whatever accident exposed, they do not shun a distinct and continued view; and certainly what we hide from ourselves, we do not show to our friends. There is, indeed, no transaction which offers stronger temptations to fallacy and sophistication than epistolary intercourse.

"In the eagerness of conversation, the first emotions of the mind often burst out before they are considered. In the tumult of business, interest and passion have their genuine effect; but a friendly letter is a calm and deliberate performance in the cool of leisure, in the stillness of solitude, and surely no man sits down by design to depreciate his own character.

"Friendship has no tendency to secure veracity; for by whom can a man so much wish to be thought better than he is, as by him whose kindness he desires to gain or keep? Even in writing to

the world there is less constraint; the author is not confronted with his reader, and takes his chance of approbation among the different dispositions of mankind: but a letter is addressed to a single mind, of which the prejudices and partialities are known, and must therefore please, if not by favouring them, by forbearing to oppose them. To charge those favourable representations which men give of their own minds with the guilt of hypocritical falsehood, would show more severity than knowledge. The writer commonly believes himself. Almost every man's thoughts while they are general are right, and most hearts are pure while temptation is away. It is easy to awaken generous sentiments in privacy; to despise death when there is no danger; to glow with benevolence when there is nothing to be given. While such ideas are formed they are felt, and self-love does not suspect the gleam of virtue to be the meteor of fancy.

"If the letters of Pope are considered merely as compositions, they seem to be premeditated and artificial. It is one thing to write, because there is something which the mind wishes to discharge; and another to solicit the imagination, because ceremony or vanity requires something to be written. Pope confesses his early letters to be vitiated with *affectation and ambition*. To know whether he disentangles himself from these perverters of epistolary integrity, his book and his life must be set in comparison. One of his favourite topics is contempt of his own poetry. For this, if it had been real, he would deserve no commendation; and in this he was certainly not sincere, for his high value of himself was sufficiently observed; and of what could he be proud but of his poetry? He writes, he says, when 'he has just nothing else to do,' yet Swift complains that he was never at leisure for conversation, because he 'had always some poetical scheme in his head.' It was punctually required that his writing-box should be set upon his bed before he rose; and Lord Oxford's domestic related that, in the dreadful winter of '40, she was called from her bed by him four times in one night, to supply him with paper lest he should lose a thought.

"He pretends insensibility to censure and criticism, though it was observed by all who knew him that every pamphlet disturbed his quiet, and that his extreme irritability laid him open to perpetual vexation; but he wished to despise his critics, and therefore hoped he did despise them. As he happened to live in two reigns when the court paid little attention to poetry, he nursed in his mind a foolish disesteem of kings, and proclaims that 'he never sees courts.' Yet a little regard shown him by the Prince of Wales melted his obduracy; and he had not much to say when he was asked by his Royal Highness, 'How he could love a prince while he disliked kings.'"

Johnson's best poetry is the versified expression of the tone of sentiment with which we are already familiar. The *Vanity of Human Wishes* is, perhaps, the finest poem written since Pope's time and in Pope's manner, with the exception of Goldsmith's still finer performances. Johnson, it need hardly be said, has not

Goldsmith's exquisite fineness of touch and delicacy of sentiment. He is often ponderous and verbose, and one feels that the mode of expression is not that which is most congenial; and yet the vigour of thought makes itself felt through rather clumsy modes of utterance. Here is one of the best passages, in which he illustrates the vanity of military glory:—

On what foundation stands the warrior's pride,
How just his hopes let Swedish Charles decide;
A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,
No dangers fright him and no labours tire;
O'er love, o'er fear, extends his wide domain,
Unconquer'd lord of pleasure and of pain;
No joys to him pacific sceptres yield,
War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field;
Behold surrounding kings their powers combine,
And one capitulate, and one resign:
Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain.
"Think nothing gain'd," he cries, "till nought remain
On Moscow's walls till Gothic standards fly,
And all be mine beneath the polar sky."
The march begins in military state,
And nations on his eye suspended wait;
Stern Famine guards the solitary coast,
And Winter barricades the realms of Frost.
He comes, nor want nor cold his course delay—
Hide, blushing glory, hide Pultowa's day!
The vanquish'd hero leaves his broken bands,
And shows his miseries in distant lands;
Condemn'd a needy supplicant to wait,
While ladies interpose and slaves debate—
But did not Chance at length her error mend?
Did no subverted empire mark his end?
Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound?
Or hostile millions press him to the ground?
His fall was destined to a barren strand,
A petty fortress and a dubious hand;
He left the name at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral and adorn a tale.

The concluding passage may also fitly conclude this survey of Johnson's writings. The sentiment is less gloomy than is usual, but it gives the answer which he would have given in his calmer moods to the perplexed riddle of life; and, in some form or other, it is, perhaps, the best or the only answer that can be given:—

Where, then, shall Hope and Fear their objects find?
Must dull suspense corrupt the stagnant mind?
Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,
Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?
Must no dislike alarm, no wishes rise?
No cries invoke the mercies of the skies?
Inquirer cease; petitions yet remain
Which Heaven may hear, nor deem religion vain

Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice
Safe in His power whose eyes discern afar
The secret ambush of a specious prayer.
Implore His aid, in His decisions rest,
Secure whate'er He gives—He gives the best.
Yet when the scene of sacred presence fires,
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,
Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,
Obedient passions and a will resign'd;
For Love, which scarce collective men can fill;
For Patience, sovereign o'er transmuted ill;
For Faith, that panting for a happier seat,
Counts Death kind nature's signal of retreat.
These goods for man the laws of Heaven ordain,
These goods He grants who grants the power to gain
With these Celestial Wisdom calms the mind,
And makes the happiness she does not find.

GOLDSMITH

BY

WILLIAM BLACK

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GOLDSMITH.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

"INNOCENTLY to amuse the imagination in this dream of life is wisdom." So wrote Oliver Goldsmith; and surely among those who have earned the world's gratitude by this ministration he must be accorded a conspicuous place. If, in these delightful writings of his, he mostly avoids the darker problems of existence—if the mystery of the tragic and apparently unmerited and unrequited suffering in the world is rarely touched upon—we can pardon the omission for the sake of the gentle optimism that would rather look on the kindly side of life. "You come hot and tired from the day's battle, and this sweet minstrel sings to you," says Mr. Thackeray. "Who could harm the kind vagrant harper? Whom did he ever hurt? He carries no weapon save the harp on which he plays to you; and with which he delights great and humble, young and old, the captains in the tents, or the soldiers round the fire, or the women and children in the villages, at whose porches he stops and sings his simple songs of love and beauty." And it is to be suspected—it is to be hoped, at least—that the cheerfulness which shines like sunlight through Goldsmith's writings, did not altogether desert himself even in the most trying hours of his wayward and troubled career. He had, with all his sensitiveness, a fine happy-go-lucky disposition; was ready for a frolic when he had a guinea, and, when he had none, could turn a sentence on the humorous side of starvation; and certainly never attributed to the injustice or neglect of society misfortunes the origin of which lay nearer home.

Of course, a very dark picture might be drawn of Goldsmith's life; and the sufferings that he undoubtedly endured have been made a whip with which to lash the ingratitude of a world not too quick to recognise the claims of genius. He has been put before us, without any brighter lights to the picture, as the most unfor

tunate of poor devils; the heart-broken usher; the hack ground down by sordid booksellers; the starving occupant of successive garrets. This is the aspect of Goldsmith's career which naturally attracts Mr. Forster. Mr. Forster seems to have been haunted throughout his life by the idea that Providence had some special spite against literary persons; and that, in a measure to compensate them for their sad lot, society should be very kind to them, while the Government of the day might make them Companions of the Bath or give them posts in the Civil Service. In the otherwise copious, thorough, and valuable *Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith*, we find an almost humiliating insistance on the complaint that Oliver Goldsmith did not receive greater recognition and larger sums of money from his contemporaries. Goldsmith is here "the poor neglected sizar;" his "marked ill-fortune" attends him constantly; he shares "the evil destinies of men of letters;" he was one of those who "struggled into fame without the aid of English institutions;" in short, "he wrote, and paid the penalty." Nay, even Christianity itself is impeached on account of the persecution suffered by poor Goldsmith. "There had been a Christian religion extant for seventeen hundred and fifty-seven years," writes Mr. Forster, "the world having been acquainted, for even so long, with its spiritual necessities and responsibilities; yet here, in the middle of the eighteenth century, was the eminence ordinarily conceded to a spiritual teacher, to one of those men who come upon the earth to lift their fellow-men above its miry ways. He is up in a garret, writing for bread he cannot get, and dunned for a milk-score he cannot pay." That Christianity might have been worse employed than in paying the milkman's score is true enough, for then the milkman would have come by his own; but that Christianity, or the state, or society should be scolded because an author suffers the natural consequences of his allowing his expenditure to exceed his income, seems a little hard. And this is a sort of writing that is peculiarly inappropriate in the case of Goldsmith, who, if ever any man was author of his own misfortunes, may fairly have the charge brought against him. "Men of genius," says Mr. Forster, "can more easily starve, than the world, with safety to itself, can continue to neglect and starve them." Perhaps so; but the English nation, which has always had a regard and even love for Oliver Goldsmith, that is quite peculiar in the history of literature, and which has been glad to overlook his faults and follies, and eager to sympathise with him in the many miseries of his career, will be slow to believe that it is responsible for any starvation that Goldsmith may have endured.

However, the key-note has been firmly struck, and it still vibrates. Goldsmith was the unluckiest of mortals, the hapless victim of circumstances. "Yielding to that united pressure of labour, penury, and sorrow, with a frame exhausted by unremitting and ill-rewarded drudgery, Goldsmith was indebted to the forbearance of creditors for a peaceful burial." But what, now, if some

foreigner strange to the traditions of English literature—some Japanese student, for example, or the New Zealander come before his time—were to go over the ascertained facts of Goldsmith's life, and were suddenly to announce to us, with the happy audacity of ignorance, that he, Goldsmith, was a quite exceptionally fortunate person? "Why," he might say, "I find that in a country where the vast majority of people are born to labour, Oliver Goldsmith was never asked to do a stroke of work towards the earning of his own living until he had arrived at man's estate. All that was expected of him, as a youth and as a young man, was that he should equip himself fully for the battle of life. He was maintained at college until he had taken his degree. Again and again he was furnished with funds for further study and foreign travel; and again and again he gambled his opportunities away. The constant kindness of his uncle only made him the best begging-letter-writer the world has seen. In the midst of his debt and distress as a bookseller's drudge, he receives £400 for three nights' performance of *The Good-Natured Man;* he immediately purchases chambers in Brick Court for £400; and forthwith begins to borrow as before. It is true that he died owing £2000, and was indebted to the forbearance of creditors for a peaceful burial; but it appears that during the last seven years of his life he had been earning an annual income equivalent to £800 of English currency.* He was a man liberally and affectionately brought up, who had many relatives and many friends, and who had the proud satisfaction—which has been denied to many men of genius—of knowing for years before he died that his merits as a writer had been recognised by the great bulk of his countrymen. And yet this strange English nation is inclined to suspect that it treated him rather badly; and Christianity is attacked because it did not pay Goldsmith's milk-score."

Our Japanese friend may be exaggerating; but his position is, after all, fairly tenable. It may at least be looked at, before entering on the following brief *résumé* of the leading facts in Goldsmith's life, if only to restore our equanimity. For, naturally, it is not pleasant to think that any previous generation, however neglectful of the claims of literary persons (as compared with the claims of such wretched creatures as physicians, men of science, artists, engineers, and so forth) should so cruelly have ill-treated one whom we all love now. This inheritance of ingratitude is more than we can bear. Is it true that Goldsmith was so harshly dealt with by those barbarian ancestors of ours?

* The calculation is Lord Macaulay's: see his *Biographical Essays.*

CHAPTER II.

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE.

THE Goldsmiths were of English descent; Goldsmith's father was a Protestant clergyman in a poor little village in the county of Longford; and when Oliver, one of several children, was born in this village of Pallas, or Pallasmore, on the 10th November, 1728, the Rev. Charles Goldsmith was passing rich on £40 a year. But a couple of years later Mr. Goldsmith succeeded to a more lucrative living; and forthwith removed his family to the village of Lissoy, in the county of Westmeath.

Here at once our interest in the story begins: is this Lissoy the sweet Auburn that we have known and loved since our childhood? Lord Macaulay, with a great deal of vehemence, avers that it is not; that there never was any such hamlet as Auburn in Ireland; that *The Deserted Village* is a hopelessly incongruous poem; and that Goldsmith, in combining a description of a probably Kentish village with a description of an Irish ejectment, "has produced something which never was, and never will be, seen in any part of the world." This criticism is ingenious and plausible, but it is unsound, for it happens to overlook one of the radical facts of human nature—the magnifying delight of the mind in what is long remembered and remote. What was it that the imagination of Goldsmith, in his life-long banishment, could not see when he looked back to the house of his childhood, and his early friends, and the spots and occupations of his youth? Lissoy was no doubt a poor enough Irish village; and perhaps the farms were not too well cultivated; and perhaps the village preacher, who was so dear to all the country round, had to administer many a thrashing to a certain graceless son of his; and perhaps Paddy Byrne was something of a pedant; and no doubt pigs ran over the "nicely sanded floor" of the inn; and no doubt the village statesmen occasionally indulged in a free fight. But do you think that was the Lissoy that Goldsmith thought of in his dreary lodgings in Fleet-street courts? No. It was the Lissoy where the vagrant lad had first seen the "primrose peep beneath the thorn:" where he had listened to the mysterious call of the bittern by the unfrequented river; it was a Lissoy still ringing with the glad laughter of young people in the twilight hours; it was a Lissoy forever beautiful, and tender, and far away. The grown-up Goldsmith had not to go

to any Kentish village for a model; the familiar scenes of his youth, regarded with all the wistfulness and longing of an exile, became glorified enough. "If I go to the opera where Signora Colomba pours out all the mazes of melody," he writes to Mr. Hodson, "I sit and sigh for Lissoy's fireside, and *Johnny Armstrong's Last Good Night* from Peggy Golden."

There was but little in the circumstances of Goldsmith's early life likely to fit him for, or to lead him into, a literary career; in fact, he did not take to literature until he had tried pretty nearly every thing else as a method of earning a living. If he was intended for anything, it was no doubt his father's wish that he should enter the Church; and he got such education as the poor Irish clergyman—who was not a very provident person—could afford. The child Goldsmith was first of all taught his alphabet at home, by a maid-servant, who was also a relation of the family; then, at the age of six, he was sent to that village school which, with its profound and learned master, he has made familiar to all of us; and after that he was sent further a-field for his learning, being moved from this to the other boarding-school as the occasion demanded. Goldsmith's school-life could not have been altogether a pleasant time for him. We hear, indeed, of his being concerned in a good many frolics—robbing orchards, and the like; and it is said that he attained proficiency in the game of fives. But a shy and sensitive lad like Goldsmith, who was eagerly desirous of being thought well of, and whose appearance only invited the thoughtless but cruel ridicule of his schoolmates, must have suffered a good deal. He was little, pitted with the small-pox, and awkward; and schoolboys are amazingly frank. He was not strong enough to thrash them into respect of him; he had no big brother to become his champion; his pocket-money was not lavish enough to enable him to buy over enemies or subsidize allies.

In similar circumstances it has sometimes happened that a boy physically inferior to his companions has consoled himself by proving his mental prowess—has scored off his failure at cricket by the taking of prizes, and has revenged himself for a drubbing by writing a lampoon. But even this last resource was not open to Goldsmith. He was a dull boy; "a stupid, heavy blockhead," is Dr. Strean's phrase in summing up the estimate formed of young Goldsmith by his contemporaries at school. Of course, as soon as he became famous, everybody began to hunt up recollections of his having said or done this or that, in order to prove that there were signs of the coming greatness. People began to remember that he had been suspected of scribbling verses, which he burned. What schoolboy has not done the like? We know how the biographers of great painters point out to us that their hero early showed the bent of his mind by drawing the figures of animals on doors and walls with a piece of chalk; as to which it may be observed that, if every schoolboy who scribbled verses and sketched in chalk on a brick wall were to grow up a genius, poems and pictures would be plentiful enough. However, there is the apparently authenti-

cated anecdote of young Goldsmith's turning the tables on the fiddler at his uncle's dancing-party. The fiddler, struck by the odd look of the boy who was capering about the room, called out "Æsop!" whereupon Goldsmith is said to have instantly replied,

> "Our herald hath proclaimed this saying,
> See Æsop dancing and his monkey playing!"

But even if this story be true, it is worth nothing as an augury; for quickness of repartee was precisely the accomplishment which the adult Goldsmith conspicuously lacked. Put a pen into his hand, and shut him up in a room: then he was master of the situation—nothing could be more incisive, polished, and easy than his playful sarcasm. But in society any fool could get the better of him by a sudden question followed by a horse-laugh. All through his life—even after he had become one of the most famous of living writers—Goldsmith suffered from want of self-confidence. He was too anxious to please. In his eager acquiescence, he would blunder into any trap that was laid for him. A grain or two of the stolid self-sufficiency of the blockheads who laughed at him would not only have improved his character, but would have considerably added to the happiness of his life.

As a natural consequence of this timidity, Goldsmith, when opportunity served, assumed airs of magnificent importance. Every one knows the story of the mistake on which *She Stoops to Conquer* is founded. Getting free at last from all the turmoil, and anxieties, and mortifications of school-life, and returning home on a lent hack, the released schoolboy is feeling very grand indeed. He is not sixteen, would fain pass for a man, and has a whole golden guinea in his pocket. And so he takes the journey very leisurely until, getting benighted in a certain village, he asks the way to the "best house," and is directed by a facetious person to the house of the squire. The squire by good luck falls in with the joke; and then we have a very pretty comedy indeed—the impecunious schoolboy playing the part of a fine gentleman on the strength of his solitary guinea, ordering a bottle of wine after supper, and inviting his landlord and his landlord's wife and daughter to join him in the supper-room. The contrast, in *She Stoops to Conquer*, between Marlow's embarrassed diffidence on certain occasions and his audacious effrontery on others, found many a parallel in the incidents of Goldsmith's own life; and it is not improbable that the writer of the comedy was thinking of some of his own experiences, when he made Miss Hardcastle say to her timid suitor: "A want of courage upon some occasions assumes the appearance of ignorance, and betrays us when we most want to excel."

It was, perhaps, just as well that the supper, and bottle of wine, and lodging at Squire Featherston's had not to be paid for out of the schoolboy's guinea; for young Goldsmith was now on his way to college, and the funds at the disposal of the Goldsmith family

were not over-abundant. Goldsmith's sister having married the son of a well-to-do man, her father considered it a point of honour that she should have a dowry; and in giving her a sum of £400 he so crippled the means of the family, that Goldsmith had to be sent to college, not as a pensioner but as a sizar. It appears that the young gentleman's pride revolted against this proposal; and that he was won over to consent only by the persuasions of his uncle Contarine, who himself had been a sizar. So Goldsmith, now in his eighteenth year, went to Dublin; managed somehow or other—though he was the last in the list—to pass the necessary examination; and entered upon his college career (1745).

How he lived, and what he learned, at Trinity College, are both largely matters of conjecture; the chief features of such record as we have are the various means of raising a little money to which the poor sizar had to resort; a continued quarrelling with his tutor, an ill-conditioned brute, who baited Goldsmith and occasionally beat him; and a chance frolic when funds were forthcoming. It was while he was at Trinity College that his father died; so that Goldsmith was rendered more than ever dependent on the kindness of his uncle Contarine, who throughout seems to have taken much interest in his odd ungainly nephew. A loan from a friend or a visit to the pawnbroker tided over the severer difficulties; and then from time to time the writing of street-ballads, for which he got five shillings a-piece at a certain repository, came in to help. It was a happy-go-lucky, hand-to-mouth sort of existence, involving a good deal of hardship and humiliation, but having its frolics and gayeties notwithstanding. One of these was pretty near to putting an end to his collegiate career altogether. He had, smarting under a public admonition for having been concerned in a riot, taken seriously to his studies and had competed for a scholarship. He missed the scholarship, but gained an exhibition of the value of thirty shillings; whereupon he collected a number of friends of both sexes in his rooms, and proceeded to have high jinks there. In the midst of the dancing and uproar, in comes his tutor, in such a passion that he knocks Goldsmith down. This insult, received before his friends, was too much for the unlucky sizar, who, the very next day, sold his books, ran away from college, and ultimately, after having been on the verge of starvation once or twice, made his way to Lissoy. Here his brother got hold of him, persuaded him to go back, and the escapade was condoned somehow. Goldsmith remained at Trinity College until he took his degree (1749). He was again lowest in the list; but still he had passed; and he must have learned something. He was now twenty-one, with all the world before him; and the question was as to how he was to employ such knowledge as he had acquired.

CHAPTER III.

IDLENESS AND FOREIGN TRAVEL.

BUT Goldsmith was not in any hurry to acquire either wealth or fame. He had a happy knack of enjoying the present hour—especially when there were one or two boon companions with him, and a pack of cards to be found; and, after his return to his mother's house, he appears to have entered upon the business of idleness with much philosophical satisfaction. If he was not quite such an unlettered clown as he has described in Tony Lumpkin, he had at least all Tony Lumpkin's high spirits and love of joking and idling; and he was surrounded at the ale-house by just such a company of admirers as used to meet at the famous Three Pigeons. Sometimes he helped in his brother's school; sometimes he went errands for his mother; occasionally he would sit and meditatively play the flute—for the day was to be passed somehow; then in the evening came the assemblage in Conway's inn, with the glass, and the pipe, and the cards, and the uproarious jest or song. "But scripture saith an ending to all fine things must be," and the friends of this jovial young "buckeen" began to tire of his idleness and his recurrent visits. They gave him hints that he might set about doing something to provide himself with a living; and the first thing they thought of was that he should go into the Church perhaps as a sort of purification-house after George Conway's inn. Accordingly Goldsmith, who appears to have been a most good-natured and compliant youth, did make application to the Bishop of Elphin. There is some doubt about the precise reasons which induced the Bishop to decline Goldsmith's application, but at any rate the Church was denied the aid of the young man's eloquence and erudition. Then he tried teaching, and through the good offices of his uncle he obtained a tutorship which he held for a considerable time—long enough, indeed, to enable him to amass a sum of thirty pounds. When he quarrelled with his patron, and once more "took the world for his pillow," as the Gaelic stories say, he had this sum in his pocket and was possessed of a good horse.

He started away from Ballymahon, where his mother was now living, with some vague notion of making his fortune as casual circumstance might direct. The expedition came to a premature end; and he returned without the money, and on the back of a wretched animal, telling his mother a cock-and-bull story of the

most amusing simplicity. "If Uncle Contarine believed those letters," says Mr. Thackeray, "if Oliver's mother believed that story which the youth related of his going to Cork, with the purpose of embarking for America; of his having paid his passage-money, and having sent his kit on board; of the anonymous captain sailing away with Oliver's valuable luggage, in a nameless ship, never to return—if Uncle Contarine and the mother at Ballymahon believed his stories, they must have been a very simple pair; as it was a very simple rogue indeed who cheated them." Indeed, if anyone is anxious to fill up this hiatus in Goldsmith's life, the best thing he can do is to discard Goldsmith's suspicious record of his adventures, and put in its place the faithful record of the adventures of Mr. Barry Lyndon, when that modest youth left his mother's house and rode to Dublin, with a certain number of guineas in his pocket. But whether Uncle Contarine believed the story or no, he was ready to give the young gentleman another chance; and this time it was the legal profession that was chosen. Goldsmith got fifty pounds from his uncle, and reached Dublin. In a remarkably brief space of time he had gambled away the fifty pounds, and was on his way back to Ballymahon, where his mother's reception of him was not very cordial, though his uncle forgave him, and was once more ready to start him in life. But in what direction? Teaching, the Church, and the law had lost their attractions for him. Well, this time it was medicine. In fact, any sort of project was capable of drawing forth the good old uncle's bounty. The funds were again forthcoming; Goldsmith started for Edinburgh, and now (1752) saw Ireland for the last time.

He lived, and he informed his uncle that he studied, in Edinburgh for a year and a half; at the end of which time it appeared to him that his knowledge of medicine would be much improved by foreign travel. There was Albinus, for example, "the great professor of Leyden," as he wrote to the credulous uncle, from whom he would doubtless learn much. When, having got another twenty pounds for travelling expenses, he did reach Leyden (1754), he mentioned Gaubius, the chemical professor. Gaubius is also a good name. That his intercourse with these learned persons, and the serious nature of his studies, were not incompatible with a little light relaxation in the way of gambling is not impossible. On one occasion, it is said, he was so lucky that he came to a fellow-student with his pockets full of money; and was induced to resolve never to play again—a resolution broken about as soon as made. Of course he lost all his winnings, and more; and had to borrow a trifling sum to get himself out of the place. Then an incident occurs which is highly characteristic of the better side of Goldsmith's nature. He had just got this money, and was about to leave Leyden, when, as Mr. Forster writes, "he passed a florist's garden on his return, and seeing some rare and high-priced flower, which his uncle Contarine, an enthusiast in such things, had often spoken and been in search of, he ran in without another thought than of immediate pleasure to his kindest friend, bought a parcel

of the roots, and sent them off to Ireland." He had a guinea in his pocket when he started on the grand tour.

Of this notable period in Goldsmith's life (1755–6) very little is known, though a good deal has been guessed. A minute record of all the personal adventures that befell the wayfarer as he trudged from country to country, a diary of the odd humours and fancies that must have occurred to him in his solitary pilgrimages, would be of quite inestimable value; but even the letters that Goldsmith wrote home from time to time are lost; while *The Traveller* consists chiefly of a series of philosophical reflections on the government of various states, more likely to have engaged the attention of a Fleet-street author, living in an atmosphere of books, than to have occupied the mind of a tramp anxious about his supper and his night's lodging. Boswell says he "disputed" his way through Europe. It is much more probable that he begged his way through Europe. The romantic version, which has been made the subject of many a charming picture, is that he was entertained by the peasantry whom he had delighted with his playing on the flute. It is quite probable that Goldsmith, whose imagination had been captivated by the story of how Baron von Holberg had as a young man really passed through France, Germany, and Holland in this Orpheus-like manner, may have put a flute in his pocket when he left Leyden; but it is far from safe to assume, as is generally done, that Goldsmith was himself the hero of the adventures described in Chapter XX. of the *Vicar of Wakefield.* It is the more to be regretted that we have no authentic record of these devious wanderings, that by this time Goldsmith had acquired, as is shown in other letters, a polished, easy, and graceful style, with a very considerable faculty of humorous observation. Those ingenious letters to his uncle (they usually included a little hint about money) were, in fact, a trifle too literary both in substance and in form; we could even now, looking at them with a pardonable curiosity, have spared a little of their formal antithesis for some more precise information about the writer and his surroundings.

The strangest thing about this strange journey all over Europe was the failure of Goldsmith to pick up even a common and ordinary acquaintance with the familiar facts of natural history. The ignorance on this point of the author of the *Animated Nature* was a constant subject of jest among Goldsmith's friends. They declared he could not tell the difference between any two sorts of barn-door fowl until he saw them cooked and on the table. But it may be said permanently here that, even when he is wrong as to his facts or his sweeping generalisations, one is inclined to forgive him on account of the quaint gracefulness and point of his style. When Mr. Burchell says, "This rule seems to extend even to other animals: the little vermin race are ever treacherous, cruel, and cowardly, whilst those endowed with strength and power are generous, brave, and gentle," we scarcely stop to reflect that the merlin, which is not much bigger than a thrush, has an extraordi-

nary courage and spirit, while the lion, if all stories be true, is, unless when goaded by hunger, an abject skulker. Elsewhere, indeed, in the *Animated Nature*, Goldsmith gives credit to the smaller birds for a good deal of valour, and then goes on to say, with a charming freedom, "But their contentions are sometimes of a gentler nature. Two male birds shall strive in song till, after a long struggle, the loudest shall entirely silence the other. During these contentions the female sits an attentive silent auditor, and often rewards the loudest songster with her company during the season." Yet even this description of the battle of the bards, with the queen of love as arbiter, is scarcely so amusing as his happy-go-lucky notions with regard to the variability of species. The philosopher, flute in hand, who went wandering from the canals of Holland to the ice-ribbed falls of the Rhine, may have heard from time to time that contest between singing-birds which he so imaginatively describes; but it was clearly the Fleet-street author, living among books, who arrived at the conclusion that intermarriage of species is common among small birds and rare among big birds. Quoting some lines of Addison's which express the belief that birds are a virtuous race—that the nightingale, for example, does not covet the wife of his neighbour, the blackbird—Goldsmith goes on to observe, "But whatever may be the poet's opinion, the probability is against this fidelity among the smaller tenants of the grove. The great birds are much more true to their species than these; and, of consequence, the varieties among them are more few. Of the ostrich, the cassowary, and the eagle, there are but few species; and no arts that man can use could probably induce them to mix with each other."

What he did bring back from his foreign travels was a medical degree. Where he got it, and how he got it, are alike matters of pure conjecture; but it is extremely improbable that—whatever he might have been willing to write home from Padua or Louvain, in order to coax another remittance from his Irish friends—he would afterwards, in the presence of such men as Johnson, Burke and Reynolds, wear sham honours. It is much more probable that, on his finding those supplies from Ireland running ominously short, the philosophic vagabond determined to prove to his correspondents that he was really at work somewhere, instead of merely idling away his time, begging or borrowing the wherewithal to pass him from town to town. That he did see something of the foreign universities is evident from his own writings; there are touches of description here and there which he could not well have got from books. With this degree, and with such book-learning and such knowledge of nature and human nature as he had chosen or managed to pick up during all those years, he was now called upon to begin life for himself. The Irish supplies stopped altogether. His letters were left unanswered. And so Goldsmith somehow or other got back to London (February 1, 1756), and had to cast about for some way of earning his daily bread.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY STRUGGLES—HACK-WRITIGN.

HERE ensued a very dark period in his life. He was alone in London, without friends, without money, without introductions; his appearance was the reverse of prepossessing; and, even despite that medical degree and his acquaintance with the learned Albinus and the learned Gaubius, he had practically nothing of any value to offer for sale in the great labour-market of the world. How he managed to live at all is a mystery: it is certain that he must have endured a great deal of want; and one may well sympathise with so gentle and sensitive a creature reduced to such straits, without inquiring too curiously into the causes of his misfortunes. If, on the one hand, we cannot accuse society, or Christianity, or the English government of injustice or cruelty because Goldsmith had gambled away his chances and was now called on to pay the penalty, on the other hand, we had better, before blaming Goldsmith himself, inquire into the origin of those defects of character which produced such results. As this would involve an *excursus* into the controversy between Necessity and Free-will, probably most people would rather leave it alone. It may safely be said in any case that, while Goldsmith's faults and follies, of which he himself had to suffer the consequences, are patent enough, his character, on the whole, was distinctly a lovable one. Goldsmith was his own enemy, and everybody else's friend: that is not a serious indictment, as things go. He was quite well aware of his weaknesses; and he was also—it may be hinted—aware of the good-nature which he put forward as condonation. If some foreigner were to ask how it is that so thoroughly a commercial people as the English are—strict in the acknowledgment and payment of debt—should have always betrayed a sneaking fondness for the character of the good-humored scapegrace whose hand is in everybody's pocket, and who throws away other people's money with the most charming air in the world, Goldsmith might be pointed to as one of many literary teachers whose own circumstances were not likely to make them severe censors of the Charles Surfaces, or lenient judges of the Joseph Surfaces of the world. Be merry while you may; let to-morrow take care of itself; share your last guinea with anyone, even if the poor drones of society—the butcher, and baker, and milkman with his score—have to suffer; do anything you like, so

long as you keep the heart warm. All this is a delightful philosophy. It has its moments of misery—its periods of reaction—but it has its moments of high delight. When we are invited to contemplate the "evil destinies of men of letters," we ought to be shown the flood-tides as well as the ebb-tides. The tavern gayety; the brand-new coat and lace and sword; the midnight frolics, with jolly companions every one—these, however brief and intermittent, should not be wholly left out of the picture. Of course it is very dreadful to hear of poor Boyse lying in bed with nothing but a blanket over him, and with his arms thrust through two holes in the blanket, so that he could write—perhaps a continuation of his poem on the *Deity*. But then we should be shown Boyse when he was spending the money collected by Dr. Johnson to get the poor scribbler's clothes out of pawn; and we should also be shown him, with his hands through the holes in the blanket, enjoying the mushrooms and truffles on which, as a little garniture for "his last scrap of beef," he had just laid out his last half-guinea.

There were but few truffles—probably there was but little beef—for Goldsmith during this sombre period. "His threadbare coat, his uncouth figure, and Hibernian dialect caused him to meet with repeated refusals." But at length he got some employment in a chemist's shop, and this was a start. Then he tried practising in a small way on his own account in Southwark. Here he made the acquaintance of a printer's workman; and through him he was engaged as corrector of the press in the establishment of Mr. Samuel Richardson. Being so near to literature, he caught the infection; and naturally began with a tragedy. This tragedy was shown to the author of *Clarissa Harlowe;* but it only went the way of many similar first inspiritings of the Muse. Then Goldsmith drifted to Peckham, where we find him (1757) installed as usher at Dr. Milner's school. Goldsmith as usher has been the object of much sympathy; and he would certainly deserve it, if we are to assume that his description of an usher's position in the *Bee*, and in George Primrose's advice to his cousin, was a full and accurate description of his life at Peckham. "Browbeat by the master, hated for my ugly face by the mistress, worried by the boys"—if that was his life, he was much to be pitied. But we cannot believe it. The Milners were exceedingly kind to Goldsmith. It was at the intercession of young Milner, who had been his fellow-student at Edinburgh, that Goldsmith got the situation, which at all events kept him out of the reach of immediate want. It was through the Milners that he was introduced to Griffiths, who gave him a chance of trying a literary career—as a hack-writer of reviews and so forth. When, having got tired of that, Goldsmith was again floating vaguely on the waves of chance, where did he find a harbour but in that very school at Peckham? And we have the direct testimony of the youngest of Dr. Milner's daughters, that this Irish usher of theirs was a remarkably cheerful, and even facetious person, constantly playing tricks and practical jokes, amusing the boys by telling stories and by performances on the flute, living a careless

life, and always in advance of his salary. Any beggars, or group of children, even the very boys who played back practical jokes on him, were welcome to a share of what small funds he had; and we all know how Mrs. Milner good-naturedly said one day, "You had better, Mr. Goldsmith, let me keep your money for you, as I do for some of the young gentlemen;" and how he answered with much simplicity, "In truth, Madam, there is equal need." With Goldsmith's love of approbation and extreme sensitiveness, he no doubt suffered deeply from many slights, now as at other times; but what we know of his life in the Peckham school does not incline us to believe that it was an especially miserable period of his existence. His abundant cheerfulness does not seem to have at any time deserted him; and what with tricks, and jokes, and playing of the flute, the dull routine of instructing the unruly young gentlemen at Dr. Milner's was got through somehow.

When Goldsmith left the Peckham school to try hack-writing in Paternoster Row, he was going further to fare worse. Griffiths the bookseller, when he met Goldsmith at Dr. Milner's dinner-table and invited him to become a reviewer, was doing a service to the English nation—for it was in this period of machine-work that Goldsmith discovered that happy faculty of literary expression that led to the composition of his masterpieces—but he was doing little immediate service to Goldsmith.

The newly-captured hack was boarded and lodged at Griffiths' house in Paternoster Row (1757); he was to have a small salary in consideration of remorselessly constant work; and—what was the hardest condition of all—he was to have his writings revised by Mrs. Griffiths. Mr. Forster justly remarks that though at last Goldsmith had thus become a man-of-letters, he "had gratified no passion and attained no object of ambition." He had taken to literature, as so many others have done, merely as a last resource. And if it is true that literature at first treated Goldsmith harshly, made him work hard, and gave him comparatively little for what he did, at least it must be said that his experience was not a singular one. Mr. Forster says that literature was at that time in a transition state: "The patron was gone, and the public had not come." But when Goldsmith began to do better than hack-work, he found a public speedily enough. If, as Lord Macaulay computes, Goldsmith received in the last seven years of his life what was equivalent to £5600 of our money, even the villain booksellers cannot be accused of having starved him. At the outset of his literary career he received no large sums, for he had achieved no reputation; but he got the market-rate for his work. We have around us at this moment plenty of hacks who do not earn much more than their board and lodging with a small salary.

For the rest, we have no means of knowing whether Goldsmith got through his work with ease or with difficulty; but it is obvious, looking over the reviews which he is believed to have written for Griffiths' magazine, that he readily acquired the professional critic's airs of superiority, along with a few tricks of the trade, no doubt

taught him by Griffiths. Several of these reviews, for example, are merely epitomes of the contents of the books reviewed, with some vague suggestion that the writer might, if he had been less careful, have done worse, and, if he had been more careful, might have done better. Who does not remember how the philosophic vagabond was taught to become a cognoscento? "The whole secret consisted in a strict adherence to two rules: the one always to observe that the picture might have been better if the painter had taken more pains; and the other to praise the works of Pietro Perugino." It is amusing to observe the different estimates formed of the function of criticism by Goldsmith the critic and by Goldsmith the author. Goldsmith, sitting at Griffiths' desk, naturally magnifies his office, and announces his opinion that "to direct our taste, and conduct the poet up to perfection, has ever been the true critic's province." But Goldsmith the author, when he comes to enquire into the existing state of Polite Learning in Europe, finds in criticism not a help but a danger. It is "the natural destroyer of polite learning." And again, in the *Citizen of the World*, he exclaimed against the pretensions of the critic. "If any choose to be critics, it is but saying they are critics; and from that time forward they become invested with full power and authority over every caitiff who aims at their instruction or entertainment."

This at least may be said, that in these early essays contributed to the *Monthly Review* there is much more of Goldsmith the critic than of Goldsmith the author. They are somewhat laboured performances. They are almost devoid of the sly and delicate humour that afterwards marked Goldsmith's best prose work. We find throughout his trick of antithesis; but here it is forced and formal, whereas afterwards he lent to this habit of writing the subtle surprise of epigram. They have the true manner of authority, nevertheless. He says of Home's *Douglas:* "Those parts of nature, and that rural simplicity with which the author was, perhaps, best acquainted, are not unhappily described; and hence we are led to conjecture that a more universal knowledge of nature will probably increase his powers of description." If the author had written otherwise, he would have written differently; had he known more, he would not have been so ignorant; the tragedy is a tragedy, but why did not the author make it a comedy?—this sort of criticism has been heard of even in our own day. However, Goldsmith pounded away at his newly-found work, under the eye of the exacting bookseller and his learned wife. We find him dealing with Scandinavian (here called Celtic) mythology, though he does not adventure on much comment of his own; then he engages Smollett's *History of England*, but mostly in the way of extract; anon we find him reviewing *A Journal of Eight Days' Journey*, by Jonas Hanway, of whom Johnson said that he made some reputation by travelling abroad, and lost it all by travelling at home. Then again we find him writing a disquisition on *Some Enquiries concerning the First Inhabitants, Language, Religion, Learning, and Letters of Europe*, by a Mr. Wise, who, along with his critic,

appears to have got into hopeless confusion in believing Basque and Armorican to be the remains of the same ancient language. The last phrase of a note appended to this review by Goldsmith probably indicates his own humble estimate of his work at this time. "It is more our business," he says, "to exhibit the opinions of the learned than to controvert them." In fact, he was employed to boil down books for people who did not wish to spend more on literature than the price of a magazine. Though he was new to the trade, it is probable he did it as well as any other.

At the end of five months, Goldsmith and Griffiths quarrelled and separated. Griffiths said Goldsmith was idle; Goldsmith said Griffiths was impertinent; probably the editorial supervision exercised by Mrs. Griffiths had something to do with the dire contention. From Paternoster Row Goldsmith removed to a garret in Fleet Street; had his letters addressed to a coffee-house; and apparently supported himself by further hack-work, his connection with Griffiths not being quite severed. Then he drifted back to Peckham again; and was once more installed as usher, Dr. Milner being in especial want of an assistant at this time. Goldsmith's lingering about the gates of literature had not inspired him with any great ambition to enter the enchanted land. But at the same time he thought he saw in literature a means by which a little ready money might be made, in order to help him on to something more definite and substantial; and this goal was now put before him by Dr. Milner, in the shape of a medical appointment on the Coromandel coast. It was in the hope of obtaining this appointment that he set about composing that *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe*, which is now interesting to us as the first of his more ambitious works. As the book grew under his hands, he began to cast about for subscribers; and from the Fleet-street coffee-house—he had again left the Peckham school—he addressed to his friends and relatives a series of letters of the most charming humor, which might have drawn subscriptions from a millstone. To his brother-in-law, Mr. Hodson, he sent a glowing account of the great fortune in store for him on the Coromandel coast. "The salary is but trifling," he writes, "namely, £100 per annum, but the other advantages, if a person be prudent, are considerable. The practice of the place, if I am rightly informed, generally amounts to not less than £1000 per annum, for which the appointed physician has an exclusive privilege. This, with the advantages resulting from trade, and the high interest which money bears, viz. £20 per cent, are the inducements which persuade me to undergo the fatigues of sea, the dangers of war, and the still greater dangers of the climate; which induce me to leave a place where I am every day gaining friends and esteem, and where I might enjoy all the conveniences of life."

The surprising part of this episode in Goldsmith's life is that he did really receive the appointment; in fact, he was called upon to pay £10 for the appointment-warrant. In this emergency he went to the proprietor of the *Critical Review*, the rival of the *Monthly*,

and obtained some money for certain anonymous work which need not be mentioned in detail here. He also moved into another garret, this time in Green-Arbour Court, Fleet Street, in a wilderness of slums. The Coromandel project, however, on which so many hopes had been built, fell through. No explanation of the collapse could be got from either Goldsmith himself or from Dr. Milner. Mr. Forster suggests that Goldsmith's inability to raise money for his outfit may have been made the excuse for transferring the appointment to another; and that is probable enough; but it is also probable that the need for such an excuse was based on the discovery that Goldsmith was not properly qualified for the post. And this seems the more likely, that Goldsmith immediately afterwards resolved to challenge examination at Surgeons' Hall. He undertook to write four articles for the *Monthly Review;* Griffiths became surety to a tailor for a fine suit of clothes; and thus equipped, Goldsmith presented himself at Surgeons' Hall. He only wanted to be passed as hospital mate; but even that modest ambition was unfulfilled. He was found not qualified, and returned, with his fine clothes, to his Fleet-street den. He was now thirty years of age (1758); and had found no definite occupation in the world.

CHAPTER V.

BEGINNING OF AUTHORSHIP—THE BEE.

DURING the period that now ensued, and amid much quarrelling with Griffiths and hack-writing for the *Critical Review*, Goldsmith managed to get his *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* completed; and it is from the publication of that work, on the 2d of April, 1759, that we may date the beginning of Goldsmith's career as an author. The book was published anonymously; but Goldsmith was not at all anxious to disclaim the parentage of his first-born; and in Grub Street and its environs, at least, the authorship of the book was no secret. Moreover, there was that in it which was likely to provoke the literary tribe to plenty of fierce talking. The *Enquiry* is neither more nor less than an endeavour to prove that criticism has in all ages been the deadly enemy of art and literature; coupled with an appeal to authors to draw their inspiration from nature rather than from books, and varied here and there by a gentle sigh over the loss of that patronage, in the sunshine of which men of genius were wont to bask. Goldsmith, not having been an author himself, could not have suffered much at the hands of the critics; so that it is not to be supposed that personal feeling dictated this fierce onslaught on the whole tribe of critics, compilers, and commentators. They are represented to us as rank weeds growing up to choke all manifestations of true art. "Ancient learning," we are told at the outset, "may be distinguished into three periods: its commencement, or the age of poets; its maturity, or the age of philosophers; and its decline, or the age of critics." Then our guide carries us into the dark ages; and, with lantern in hand, shows us the creatures swarming there in the sluggish pools—"commentators, compilers, polemic divines, and intricate metaphysicians." We come to Italy: look at the affectations with which the Virtuosi and Filosofi have enchained the free spirit of poetry. "Poetry is no longer among them an imitation of what we see, but of what a visionary might wish. The zephyr breathes the most exquisite perfume; the trees wear eternal verdure; fawns; and dryads, and hamadryads, stand ready to fan the sultry shepherdess, who has forgot, indeed, the prettiness with which Guarini's shepherdesses have been reproached, but is so simple and innocent as often to have no mean

ing. Happy country, where the pastoral age begins to revive!—where the wits even of Rome are united into a rural group of nymphs and swains, under the appellation of modern Arcadians!—where in the midst of porticoes, processions, and cavalcades, abbés turned shepherds and shepherdesses without sheep indulge their innocent *divertimenti!*"

In Germany the ponderous volumes of the commentators next come in for animadversion; and here we find an epigram, the quaint simplicity of which is peculiarly characteristic of Goldsmith. "Were angels to write books," he remarks, "they never would write folios." But Germany gets credit for the money spent by her potentates on learned institutions; and it is perhaps England that is delicately hinted at in these words: "Had the fourth part of the immense sum above mentioned been given in proper rewards to genius, in some neighbouring countries, it would have rendered the name of the donor immortal, and added to the real interests of society." Indeed, when we come to England, we find that men of letters are in a bad way, owing to the prevalence of critics, the tyranny of booksellers, and the absence of patrons. "The author, when unpatronized by the great, has naturally recourse to the bookseller. There cannot perhaps be imagined a combination more prejudicial to taste than this. It is the interest of the one to allow as little for writing, and of the other to write as much as possible. Accordingly, tedious compilations and periodical magazines are the result of their joint endeavours. In these circumstances the author bids adieu to fame, writes for bread, and for that only. Imagination is seldom called in. He sits down to address the venal muse with the most phlegmatic apathy; and, as we are told of the Russian, courts his mistress by falling asleep in her lap. His reputation never spreads in a wider circle than that of the trade, who generally value him, not for the fineness of his compositions, but the quantity he works off in a given time.

"A long habit of writing for bread thus turns the ambition of every author at last into avarice. He finds that he has written many years, that the public are scarcely acquainted even with his name; he despairs of applause, and turns to profit, which invites him. He finds that money procures all those advantages, that respect, and that ease which he vainly expected from fame. Thus the man who, under the protection of the great, might have done honour to humanity, when only patronized by the bookseller becomes a thing little superior to the fellow who works at the press."

Nor was he afraid to attack the critics of his own day, though he knew that the two Reviews for which he had recently been writing would have something to say about his own *Enquiry*. This is how he disposes of the *Critical* and the *Monthly*: "We have two literary Reviews in London, with critical newspapers and magazines without number. The compilers of these resemble the commoners of Rome; they are all for levelling property, not by increasing their own, but by diminishing that of others. The man

who has any good-nature in his disposition must, however, be somewhat displeased to see distinguished reputations often the sport of ignorance—to see, by one false pleasantry, the future peace of a worthy man's life disturbed, and this only because he has unsuccessfully attempted to instruct or amuse us. Though ill-nature is far from being wit, yet it is generally laughed at as such. The critic enjoys the triumph, and ascribes to his parts what is only due to his effrontery. I fire with indignation when I see persons wholly destitute of education and genius indent to the press, and thus turn book-makers, adding to the sin of criticism the sin of ignorance also; whose trade is a bad one, and who are bad workmen in the trade." Indeed there was a good deal of random hitting in the *Enquiry*, which was sure to provoke resentment. Why, for example, should he have gone out of his way to insult the highly respectable class of people who excel in mathematical studies? "This seems a science," he observes, "to which the meanest intellects are equal. I forget who it is that says, 'All men might understand mathematics if they would." There was also in the first edition of the *Enquiry* a somewhat ungenerous attack on stage-managers, actors, actresses, and theatrical things in general; but this was afterwards wisely excised. It is not to be wondered at that, on the whole, the *Enquiry* should have been severely handled in certain quarters. Smollett, who reviewed it in the *Critical Review*, appears to have kept his temper pretty well for a Scotchman; but Kenrick, a hack employed by Griffiths to maltreat the book in the *Monthly Review*, flourished his bludgeon in a brave manner. The coarse personalities and malevolent insinuations of this bully no doubt hurt Goldsmith considerably; but, as we look at them now, they are only remarkable for their dulness. If Griffiths had had another Goldsmith to reply to Goldsmith, the retort would have been better worth reading: one can imagine the playful sarcasm that would have been dealt out to this new writer, who, in the very act of protesting against criticism, proclaimed himself a critic. But Goldsmiths are not always to be had when wanted; while Kenricks can be bought at any moment for a guinea or two a head.

Goldsmith had not chosen literature as the occupation of his life; he had only fallen back on it when other projects failed. But it is quite possible that now, as he began to take up some slight position as an author, the old ambition of distinguishing himself—which had flickered before his imagination from time to time—began to enter into his calculations along with the more pressing business of earning a livelihood. And he was soon to have an opportunity of appealing to a wider public than could have been expected for that erudite treatise on the arts of Europe. Mr. Wilkie, a bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard, proposed to start a weekly magazine, price threepence, to contain essays, short stories, letters on the topics of the day, and so forth, more or less after the manner of the *Spectator*. He asked Goldsmith to become sole contributor. Here, indeed, was a very good opening; for, although

there were many magazines in the field, the public had just then a fancy for literature i small doses; while Goldsmith, in entering into the competition, would not be hampered by the dulness of collaborateurs. He closed with Wilkie's offer; and on the 6th of October, 1759, appeared the first number of the *Bee*.

For us now there is a curious autobiographical interest in the opening sentences of the first number; but surely even the public of the day must have imagined that the new writer who was now addressing them was not to be confounded with the common herd of magazine-hacks. What could be more delightful than this odd mixture of modesty, humour, and an anxious desire to please?—"There is not, perhaps, a more whimsically dismal figure in nature than a man of real modesty, who assumes an air of impudence—who, while his heart beats with anxiety, studies ease and affects good-humour. In this situation, however, a periodical writer often finds himself upon his first attempt to address the public in form. All his power of pleasing is damped by solicitude, and his cheerfulness dashed with apprehension. Impressed with the terrors of the tribunal before which he is going to appear, his natural humour turns to pertness, and for real wit he is obliged to substitute vivacity. His first publication draws a crowd; they part dissatisfied: and the author, never more to be indulged with a favourable hearing, is left to condemn the indelicacy of his own address or their want of discernment. For my part, as I was never distinguished for address, and have often even blundered in making my bow, such bodings as these had like to have totally repressed my ambition. I was at a loss whether to give the public specious promises, or give none; whether to be merry or sad on this solemn occasion. If I should decline all merit, it was too probable the hasty reader might have taken me at my word. If, on the other hand, like labourers in the magazine trade, I had, with modest impudence, humbly presumed to promise an epitome of all the good things that ever were said or written, this might have disgusted those readers I most desire to please. Had I been merry, I might have been censured as vastly low; and had I been sorrowful, I might have been left to mourn in solitude and silence; in short, whichever way I turned, nothing presented but prospects of terror, despair, chandlers' shops, and waste paper."

And it is just possible that if Goldsmith had kept to the vein of familiar *causerie*, the public might in time have been attracted by its quaintness. But no doubt Mr. Wilkie would have started aghast; and so we find Goldsmith, as soon as his introductory bow is made, setting seriously about the magazine-making. Very soon, however, both Mr. Wilkie and his editor perceived that the public had not been taken by their venture. The chief cause of the failure, as it appears to anyone who looks over the magazine now, would seem to be the lack of any definite purpose. There was no marked feature to arrest public attention, while many things were discarded on which the popularity of other periodicals had been based. There was no scandal to appeal to the key-hole and back-

door element in human nature; there were no libels and gross personalities to delight the mean and envious; there were no fine airs of fashion to charm milliners anxious to know how the great talked, and posed, and dressed; and there was no solemn and pompous erudition to impress the minds of those serious and sensible people who buy literature as they buy butter—by its weight. At the beginning of No. IV. he admits that the new magazine has not been a success, and in doing so, returns to that vein of whimsical, personal humour with which he had started: "Were I to measure the merit of my present undertaking by its success or the rapidity of its sale, I might be led to form conclusions by no means favourable to the pride of an author. Should I estimate my fame by its extent, every newspaper and magazine would leave me far behind. Their fame is diffused in a very wide circle—that of some as far as Islington, and some yet farther still; while mine, I sincerely believe, has hardly travelled beyond the sound of Bow Bell; and, while the works of others fly like unpinioned swans, I find my own move as heavily as a new.plucked goose. Still, however, I have as much pride as they who have ten times as many readers. It is impossible to repeat all the agreeable delusions in which a disappointed author is apt to find comfort. I conclude, that what my reputation wants in extent is made up by solidity. *Minus juvat gloria lata quam magna.* I have great satisfaction in considering the delicacy and discernment of those readers I have, and in ascribing my want of popularity to the ignorance or inattention of those I have not. All the world may forsake an author, but vanity will never forsake him. Yet, notwithstanding so sincere a confession, I was once induced to show my indignation against the public by discontinuing my endeavours to please; and was bravely resolved, like Raleigh, to vex them by burning my manuscript in a passion. Upon recollection, however, I considered what set or body of people would be displeased at my rashness. The sun, after so sad an accident, might shine next morning as bright as usual; men might laugh and sing the next day and transact business as before, and not a single creature feel any regret but myself."

Goldsmith was certainly more at home in this sort of writing than in gravely lecturing people against the vice of gambling; in warning tradesmen how ill it became them to be seen at races; in demonstrating that justice is a higher virtue than generosity; and in proving that the avaricious are the true benefactors of society. But even as he confesses the failure of his new magazine, he seems determined to show the public what sort of writer this is, whom as yet they have not regarded too favourably. It is in No. IV. of the *Bee* that the famous *City Night Piece* occurs. No doubt that strange little fragment of description was the result of some sudden and aimless fancy, striking the occupant of the lonely garret in the middle of the night. The present tense, which he seldom used —and the abuse of which is one of the detestable vices of modern literature—adds to the mysterious solemnity of the recital:

"The clock has just struck two, the expiring taper rises and

sinks in the socket, the watchman forgets the hour in slumber, the laborious and the happy are at rest, and nothing wakes but meditation, guilt, revelry, and despair. The drunkard once more fills the destroying bowl, the robber walks his midnight round, and the suicide lifts his guilty arm against his own sacred person.

"Let me no longer waste the night over the page of antiquity or the sallies of contemporary genius, but pursue the solitary walk, where Vanity, ever changing, but a few hours past walked before me—where she kept up the pageant, and now, like a froward child, seems hushed with her own importunities.

"What a gloom hangs all around! The dying lamp feebly emits a yellow gleam; no sound is heard but of the chiming clock or the distant watch-dog. All the bustle of human pride is forgotten; an hour like this may well display the emptiness of human vanity.

"There will come a time when this temporary solitude may be made continual, and the city itself, like its inhabitants, fade away, and leave a desert in its room.

"What cities, as great as this, have once triumphed in existence, had their victories as great, joy as just and as unbounded; and, with short-sighted presumption, promised themselves immortality! Posterity can hardly trace the situation of some; the sorrowful traveller wanders over the awful ruins of others; and, as he beholds, he learns wisdom, and feels the transience of every sublunary possession.

"'Here,' he cries, 'stood their citadel, now grown over with weeds; there their senate-house, but now the haunt of every noxious reptile; temples and theatres stood here, now only an undistinguished heap of ruin. They are fallen, for luxury and avarice first made them feeble. The rewards of the state were conferred on amusing, and not on useful, members of society. Their riches and opulence invited the invaders, who, though at first repulsed, returned again, conquered by perseverance, and at last swept the defendants into undistinguished destruction.'"

CHAPTER VI.

PERSONAL TRAITS.

THE foregoing extracts will sufficiently show what were the chief characteristics of Goldsmith's writing at this time—the grace and ease of style, a gentle and sometimes pathetic thoughtfulness, and, above all, when he speaks in the first person, a delightful vein of humorous self-disclosure. Moreover, those qualities, if they were not immediately profitable to the bookseller, were beginning to gain for him the recognition of some of the well-known men of the day. Percy, afterwards Bishop of Dromore, had made his way to the miserable garret of the poor author. Smollett, whose novels Goldsmith preferred to his History, was anxious to secure his services as a contributor to the forthcoming *British Magazine.* Burke had spoken of the pleasure given him by Goldsmith's review of the *Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful.* But, to crown all, the great Cham himself sought out this obscure author, who had on several occasions spoken with reverence and admiration of his works; and so began what is perhaps the most interesting literary friendship on record. At what precise date Johnson first made Goldsmith's acquaintance is not known; Mr. Forster is right in assuming that they had met before the supper in the Wine-Office Court, at which Mr. Percy was present. It is a thousand pities that Boswell had not by this time made his appearance in London. Johnson, Goldsmith, and all the rest of them are only ghosts until the pertinacious young laird of Auchinleck comes on the scene to give them colour, and life, and form. It is odd enough that the very first remarks of Goldsmith's which Boswell jotted down in his note-book should refer to Johnson's systematic kindness towards the poor and wretched. "He had increased my admiration of the goodness of Johnson's heart by incidental remarks in the course of conversation, such as, when I mentioned Mr. Levett, whom he entertained under his roof, 'He is poor and honest, which is recommendation enough to Johnston;' and when I wondered that he was very kind to a man of whom I had heard a very bad character, 'He is now become miserable, and that insures the protection of Johnson.'"

For the rest, Boswell was not well-disposed towards Goldsmith, whom he regarded with a jealousy equal to his admiration of John-

son; but it is probable that his description of the personal appearance of the awkward and ungainly Irishman is in the main correct. And here also it may be said that Boswell's love of truth and accuracy compelled him to make this admission: "It has been generally circulated and believed that he (Goldsmith) was a mere fool in conversation; but, in truth, this has been greatly exaggerated." On this exaggeration—seeing that the contributor to the *British Magazine* and the *Public Ledger* was now becoming better known among his fellow-authors—a word or two may fitly be said here. It pleased Goldsmith's contemporaries, who were not all of them celebrated for their ready wit, to regard him as a hopeless and incurable fool, who by some strange chance could produce literature, the merits of which he could not himself understand. To Horace Walpole we owe the phrase which describes Goldsmith as an "inspired idiot." Innumerable stories are told of Goldsmith's blunders; of his forced attempts to shine in conversation; of poor Poll talking nonsense, when all the world was wondering at the beauty of his writing. In one case we are told he was content to admit, when dictated to, that this, and not that, was what he really had meant in a particular phrase. Now there can be no question that Goldsmith, conscious of his pitted face, his brogue, and his ungainly figure, was exceedingly nervous and sensitive in society, and was anxious, as such people mostly are, to cover his shyness by an appearence of ease, if not even of swagger; and there can be as little question that he occasionally did and said very awkward and blundering things. But our Japanese friend, whom we mentioned in our opening pages, looking through the record that is preserved to us of those blunders which are supposed to be most conclusive as to this aspect of Goldsmith's character, would certainly stare. "Good heavens," he would cry, "did men ever live who were so thick-headed as not to see the humour of this or that 'blunder;' or were they so beset with the notion that Goldsmith was only a fool, that they must needs be blind?" Take one well-known instance. He goes to France with Mrs. Horneck and her two daughters, the latter very handsome young ladies. At Lille the two girls and Goldsmith are standing at the window of the hotel, overlooking the square in which are some soldiers; and naturally the beautiful young English-women attract some attention. Thereupon Goldsmith turns indignantly away, remarking that elsewhere he also has his admirers. Now what surgical instrument was needed to get this harmless little joke into any sane person's head? Boswell may perhaps be pardoned for pretending to take the incident *au sérieux;* for as has just been said, in his profound adoration of Johnson, he was devoured by jealousy of Goldsmith; but that any other mortal should have failed to see what was meant by this little bit of humorous flattery is almost incredible. No wonder that one of the sisters afterwards referring to this "playful jest," should have expressed her astonishment at finding it put down as a proof of Goldsmith's envious disposition. But even after that disclaimer, we find Mr. Croker.

as quoted by Mr. Forster, solemnly doubting "whether the vexation so seriously exhibited by Goldsmith was real or assumed"!

Of course this is an extreme case; but there are others very similar. "He affected," says Hawkings, "Johnson's style and manner of conversation, and when he had uttered, as he often would, a laboured sentence, so tumid as to be scarce intelligible, would ask if that was not truly Johnsonian!" Is it not truly dismal to find such an utterance coming from a presumably reasonable human being? It is not to be wondered at that Goldsmith grew shy—and in some cases had to ward off the acquaintance of certain of his neighbours as being too intrusive—if he ran the risk of having his odd and grave humours so densely mistranslated. The fact is this, that Goldsmith was possessed of a very subtle quality of humour, which is at all times rare, but which is perhaps more frequently to be found in Irishmen than among other folks. It consists in the satire of the pretence and pomposities of others by means of a sort of exaggerated and playful self-depreciation. It is a most delicate and most delightful form of humour; but it is very apt to be misconstrued by the dull. Who can doubt that Goldsmith was good naturedly laughing at himself, his own plain face, his vanity, and his blunders, when he professed to be jealous of the admiration excited by the Miss Hornecks; when he gravely drew attention to the splendid colours of his coat; or when he no less gravely informed a company of his friends that he had heard a very good story, but would not repeat it, because they would be sure to miss the point of it?

This vein of playful and sarcastic self-depreciation is continually cropping up in his essay-writing, as, for example, in the passage already quoted from No. IV. of the *Bee:* "I conclude that what my reputation wants in extent is made up by its solidity. *Minus juvat gloria lata quam magna.* I have great satisfaction in considering the delicacy and discernment of those readers I have, and in ascribing my want of popularity to the ignorance or inattention of those I have not." But here, no doubt, he remembers that he is addressing the world at large, which contains many foolish persons; and so, that the delicate raillery may not be mistaken, he immediately adds, "All the world may forsake an author, but vanity will never forsake him." That he expected a quicker apprehension on the part of his intimates and acquaintances, and that he was frequently disappointed, seems pretty clear from those very stories of his "blunders." We may reasonably suspect, at all events, that Goldsmith was not quite so much of a fool as he looked; and it is far from improbable that when the ungainly Irishman was called in to make sport for the Philistines—and there were a good many Philistines in those days, if all stories be true—and when they imagined they had put him out of countenance, he was really standing aghast, and wondering how it could have pleased Providence to create such helpless stupidity.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CITIZEN OF THE WORLD.—BEAU NASH.

MEANWHILE, to return to his literary work, the *Citizen of the World* had grown out of his contributions to the *Public Ledger*, a daily newspaper started by Newbery, another bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard. Goldsmith was engaged to write for this paper two letters a week at a guinea a-piece; and these letters were, after a short time (1760), written in the character of a Chinese who had come to study European civilization. It may be noted that Goldsmith had in the *Monthly Review*, in mentioning Voltaire's memoirs of French writers, quoted a passage about Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* as follows: "It is written in imitation of the *Siamese Letters* of Du Freny and of the *Turkish Spy*; but it is an imitation which shows what the originals should have been. The success their works met with was, for the most part, owing to the foreign air of their performances; the success of the *Persian Letters* arose from the delicacy of their satire. That satire which in the mouth of an Asiatic is poignant, would lose all its force when coming from an European." And it must certainly be said that the charm of the strictures of the *Citizen of the World* lies wholly in their delicate satire, and not at all in any foreign air which the author may have tried to lend to these performances. The disguise is very apparent. In those garrulous, vivacious, whimsical, and sometimes serious papers, Lien Chi Altangi, writing to Fum Hoam in Pekin, does not so much describe the aspects of European civilization which would naturally surprise a Chinese, as he expresses the dissatisfaction of a European with certain phases of the civilization visible everywhere around him. It is not a Chinaman, but a Fleet street author by profession, who resents the competition of noble amateurs whose works otherwise bitter pills enough—are gilded by their titles: "A nobleman has but to take a pen, ink, and paper, write away through three large volumes, and then sign his name to the title-page; though the whole might have been before more disgusting than his own rent-roll, yet signing his name and title gives value to the deed, title being alone equivalent to taste, imagination, and genius. As soon as a piece, therefore, is published, the first

questions are: Who is the author? Does he keep a coach? Where lies his estate? What sort of a table does he keep? If he happens to be poor and unqualified for such a scrutiny, he and his works sink into irremediable obscurity, and too late he finds, that having fed upon turtle is a more ready way to fame than having digested Tully. The poor devil against whom fashion has set its face vainly alleges that he has been bred in every part of Europe where knowledge was to be sold; that he has grown pale in the study of nature and himself. His works may please upon the perusal, but his pretensions to fame are entirely disregared. He is treated like a fiddler, whose music, though liked, is not much praised, because he lives by it; while a gentleman performer, though the most wretched scraper alive, throws the audience into raptures. The fiddler, indeed, may in such a case console himself by thinking, that while the other goes off with all the praise, he runs away with all the money. But here the parallel drops; for while the nobleman triumphs in unmerited applause, the author by profession steals off with—nothing."

At the same time it must be allowed that the utterance of these strictures through the mouth of a Chinese admits of a certain *naïveté*, which on occasions heightens the sarcasm. Lien Chi accompanies the Man in Black to a theatre to see an English play. Here is part of the performance: "I was going to second his remarks when my attention was engrossed by a new object; a man came in balancing a straw upon his nose, and the audience were clapping their hands in all the raptures of applause. 'To what purpose,' cried I, 'does this unmeaning figure make his appearance? is he a part of the plot?'—'Unmeaning do you call him?' replied my friend in black; 'this is one of the most important characters of the whole play; nothing pleases the people more than seeing a straw balanced: there is a great deal of meaning in a straw; there is something suited to every apprehension in the sight; and a fellow possessed of talents like these is sure of making his fortune.' The third act now began with an actor who came to inform us that he was the villain of the play, and intended to show strange things before all was over. He was joined by another who seemed as much disposed for mischief as he; their intrigues continued through this whole division. 'If that be a villain,' said I, 'he must be a very stupid one to tell his secrets without being asked; such soliloquies of late are never admitted in China.' The noise of clapping interrupted me once more; a child six years old was learning to dance on the stage, which gave the ladies and mandarins infinite satisfaction. 'I am sorry,' said I, 'to see the pretty creature so early learning so bad a trade; dancing being, I presume, as contemptible here as in China.'—'Quite the reverse,' interrupted my companion; 'dancing is a very reputable and genteel employment here; men have a greater chance for encouragement from the merit of their heels than their heads. One who jumps up and flourishes his toes three times before he comes to the ground may have three hundred a year; he who flourishes them

four times gets four nundred; but he who arrives at five is inestimable, and may demand what salary he thinks proper. The female dancers, too, are valued for this sort of jumping and crossing; and it is a cant word amongst them, that she deserves most who shows highest. But the fourth act is begun; let us be attentive.' "

The Man in Black here mentioned is one of the notable features of this series of papers. The mysterious person whose acquaintance the Chinaman made in Westminster Abbey, and who concealed such a wonderful goodness of heart under a rough and forbidding exterior, is a charming character indeed; and it is impossible to praise too highly the vein of subtle sarcasm in which he preaches worldly wisdom. But to assume that any part of his history which he disclosed to the Chinaman was a piece of autobiographical writing on the part of Goldsmith, is a very hazardous thing. A writer of fiction must necessarily use such materials as have come within his own experience; and Goldsmith's experience —or his use of those materials—was extremely limited: witness how often a pet fancy, like his remembrance of *Johnny Armstrong's Last Good Night*, is repeated. "That of these simple elements," writes Professor Masson, in his *Memoir of Goldsmith*, prefixed to an addition of his works, "he made so many charming combinations, really differing from each other, and all, though suggested by fact, yet hung so sweetly in an ideal air, proved what an artist he was, and was better than much that is commonly called invention. In short, if there is a sameness of effect in Goldsmith's writings, it is because they consist of poetry and truth, humour and pathos, from his own life, and the supply from such a life as his was not inexhaustible."

The question of invention is easily disposed of. Any child can invent a world transcending human experience by the simple combination of ideas which are in themselves incongruous—a world in which the horses have each five feet, in which the grass is blue and the sky green, in which seas are balanced on the peaks of mountains. The result is unbelievable and worthless. But the writer of imaginative literature uses his own experiences and the experiences of others, so that his combination of ideas in themselves compatible shall appear so natural and believable that the reader—although these incidents and characters never did actually exist—is as much interested in them as if they had existed. The mischief of it is that the reader sometimes thinks himself very clever, and, recognizing a little bit of the story as having happened to the author, jumps to the conclusion that such and such a passage is necessary autobiographical. Hence it is that Goldsmith has been hastily identified with the Philosophic Vagabond in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, and with the Man in Black in the *Citizen of the World*. That he may have used certain experiences in the one, and that he may perhaps have given in the other a sort of fancy sketch of a person suggested by some trait in his own character, is possible enough: but further assertion of likeness is impossible. That the Man in Black had one of Goldsmith's little weaknesses is obvious

enough: we find him just a trifle too conscious of his own kindliness and generosity. The Vicar of Wakefield himself is not without a spice of his amiable vanity. As for Goldsmith, every one must remember his reply to Griffiths' accusation: "No, sir, had I been a sharper, *had I been possessed of less good-nature and native generosity*, I might surely now have been in better circumstances."

The Man in Black, in any case, is a delightful character. We detect the warm and generous nature even in his pretence of having acquired worldly wisdom: "I now therefore pursued a course of uninterrupted frugality, seldom wanted a dinner, and was consequently invited to twenty. I soon began to get the character of a saving hunks that had money, and insensibly grew into esteem. Neighbours have asked my advice in the disposal of their daughters; and I have always taken care not to give any. I have contracted a friendship with an alderman, only by observing, that if we take a farthing from a thousand pounds it will be a thousand pounds no longer. I have been invited to a pawnbroker's table, by pretending to hate gravy; and am now actually upon treaty of marriage with a rich widow, for only having observed that the bread was rising. If ever I am asked a question, whether I know it or not, instead of answering, I only smile and look wise. If a charity is proposed, I go about with the hat, but put nothing in myself. If a wretch solicits my pity, I observe that the world is filled with impostors, and take a certain method of not being deceived by never relieving. In short, I now find the truest way of finding esteem, even from the indigent, is to give away nothing, and thus have much in our power to give." This is a very clever piece of writing, whether it is in strict accordance with the character of the Man in Black or not. But there is in these *Public Ledger* papers another sketch of character, which is not only consistent in itself, and in every way admirable, but is of still further interest to us when we remember that at this time the various personages in the *Vicar of Wakefield* were no doubt gradually assuming definite form in Goldsmith's mind. It is in the figure of Mr. Tibbs, introduced apparently at haphazard, but at once taking possession of us by its quaint relief, that we find Goldsmith showing a firmer hand in character-drawing. With a few happy dramatic touches Mr. Tibbs starts into life; he speaks for himself; he becomes one of the people whom we know. And yet, with this concise and sharp portraiture of a human being, look at the graceful, almost garrulous, ease of the style:

"Our pursuer soon came up and joined us with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance. 'My dear Drybone,' cries he, shaking my friend's hand, 'where have you been hiding this half a century? Positively I had fancied you were going to cultivate matrimony and your estate in the country.' During the reply I had an opportunity of surveying the appearance of our new companion: his hat was pinched up with peculiar smartness; his looks were pale, thin, and sharp; round his neck he wore a broad black rib- and in his bosom a buckle studded with glass; his coat was

trimmed with tarnished twist; he wore by his side a sword with a black hilt; and his stockings of silk, though newly washed, were grown yellow by long service. I was so much engaged with the peculiarity of his dress, that I attended only to the latter part of my friend's reply, in which he complimented Mr. Tibbs on the taste of his clothes and the bloom in his countenance. 'Pshaw, pshaw, Will,' cried the figure, 'no more of that, if you love me: you know I hate flattery—on my soul I do; and yet, to be sure, an intimacy with the great will improve one's appearance, and a course of venison will fatten; and yet, faith, I despise the great as much as you do; but there are a great many damn'd honest fellows among them, and we must not quarrel with one half because the other wants weeding. If they were all such as my Lord Mudler, one of the most good-natured creatures that ever squeezed a lemon, I should myself be among the number of their admirers. I was yesterday to dine at the Duchess of Piccadilly's. My lord was there. "Ned," says he to me, "Ned," says he, "I'll hold gold to silver, I can tell you where you were poaching last night." "Poaching, my lord?" says I; "faith, you have missed already; for I stayed at home and let the girls poach for me. That's my way: I take a fine woman as some animals do their prey—stand still, and, swoop, they fall into my mouth."' 'Ah, Tibbs, thou art a happy fellow,' cried my companion, with looks of infinite pity; 'I hope your fortune is as much improved as your understanding, in such company?' 'Improved!' replied the other; 'you shall know—but let it go no farther—a great secret—five hundred a year to begin with—my lord's word of honour for it. His lordship took me down in his own chariot yesterday, and we had a *tete-à-tete* dinner in the country, where we talked of nothing else.' 'I fancy you forget, sir,' cried I; 'you told us but this moment of your dining yesterday in town.' 'Did I say so?' replied he, coolly; 'to be sure, if I said so, it was so. Dined in town! egad, now I do remember, I did dine in town; but I dined in the country too; for you must know, my boys, I ate two dinners. By the bye, I am grown as nice as the devil in my eating. I'll tell you a pleasant affair about that: we were a select party of us to dine at Lady Grogram's—an affected piece, but let it go no farther—a secret. Well, there happened to be no assafœtida in the sauce to a turkey, upon which, says I, I'll hold a thousand guineas, and say done, first, that—But, dear Drybone, you are an honest creature; lend me half-a-crown for a minute or two, or so, just till ——; but hearkee, ask me for it the next time we meet, or it may be twenty to one but I forget to pay you.'"

Returning from these performances to the author of them, we find him a busy man of letters, becoming more and more in request among the booksellers, and obtaining recognition among his fellow-writers. He had moved into better lodgings in Wine-Office Court (1760–2); and it was here that he entertained at supper, as has already been mentioned, no less distinguished guests than Bishop, then Mr., Percy, and Dr., then Mr., Johnson. Every one has

heard of the surprise of Percy, on calling for Johnson, to find the great Cham dressed with quite unusual smartness. On asking the cause of this "singular transformation," Johnson replied, "Why, sir, I hear that Goldsmith, who is a very great sloven, justifies his disregard of cleanliness and decency by quoting my practice; and I am desirous this night to show him a better example." That Goldsmith profited by this example—though the tailors did not—is clear enough. At times, indeed, he blossomed out into the splendours of a dandy; and laughed at himself for doing so. But whether he was in gorgeous or in mean attire, he remained the same sort of happy-go-lucky creature; working hard by fits and starts; continually getting money in advance from the booksellers; enjoying the present hour; and apparently happy enough when not pressed by debt. That he should have been thus pressed was no necessity of the case; at all events we need not on this score begin now to abuse the booksellers or the public of that day. We may dismiss once for all the oft-repeated charges of ingratitude and neglect.

When Goldsmith was writing those letters in the *Public Ledger*—with "pleasure and instruction for others," Mr. Forster says, "though at the cost of suffering to himself" he was receiving for them alone what would be equivalent in our day to £200 a year. No man can affirm that £200 a year is not amply sufficient for all the material wants of life. Of course there are fine things in the world that that amount of annual wage cannot purchase. It is a fine thing to sit on the deck of a yacht on a summer's day, and watch the far islands shining over the blue; it is a fine thing to drive four-in-hand to Ascot—if you can do it; it is a fine thing to cower breathless behind a rock and find a splendid stag coming slowly within sure range. But these things are not necessary to human happiness: it is possible to do without them and yet not "suffer." Even if Goldsmith had given all of his substance away to the poor, there was enough left to cover all the necessary wants of a human being; and if he chose so to order his affairs as to incur the suffering of debt, why that was his own business, about which nothing further needs be said. It is to be suspected, indeed, that he did not care to practise those excellent maxims of prudence and frugality which he frequently preached; but the world is not much concerned about that now. If Goldsmith had received ten times as much money as the booksellers gave him, he would still have died in debt. And it is just possible that we may exaggerate Goldsmith's sensitiveness on this score. He had had a life-long familiarity with duns and borrowing; and seemed very contented when the exigency of the hour was tided over. An angry landlady is unpleasant, and an arrest is awkward; but in comes an opportune guinea, and the bottle of Madeira is opened forthwith.

In these rooms in Wine-Office Court, and at the suggestion or entreaty of Newbery, Goldsmith produced a good deal of miscellaneous writing—pamphlets, tracts, compilations, and what not—of a more or less marketable kind. It can only be surmised that

by this time he may have formed some idea of producing a book not solely meant for the market, and that the characters in the *Vicar of Wakefield* were already engaging his attention; but the surmise becomes probable enough when we remember that his project of writing the *Traveller*, which was not published till 1764, had been formed as far back as 1755, while he was wandering aimlessly about Europe, and that a sketch of the poem was actually forwarded by him then to his brother Henry in Ireland. But in the meantime this hack-work, and the habits of life connected with it, began to tell on Goldsmith's health; and so, for a time, he left London (1762), and went to Tunbridge, and then to Bath. It is scarcely possible that his modest fame had preceded him to the latter place of fashion; but it may be that the distinguished folk of the town received this friend of the great Dr. Johnson with some small measure of distinction; for we find that his next published work, *The Life of Richard Nash, Esq.*, is respectfully dedicated to the Right Worshipful the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Common Council of the City of Bath. The Life of the recently deceased Master of Ceremonies was published anonymously (1762); but it was generally understood to be Goldsmith's; and indeed the secret of the authorship is revealed in every successive line. Among the minor writings of Goldsmith there is none more delightful than this: the mock-heroic gravity, the half-familiar contemptuous good-nature with which he composes this Funeral March of a Marionette, are extremely whimsical and amusing. And then what an admirable picture we get of fashionable English society in the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Bath and Nash were alike in the heyday of their glory—the fine ladies with their snuff-boxes, and their passion for play, and their extremely effective language when they got angry; young bucks come to flourish away their money, and gain by their losses the sympathy of the fair; sharpers on the lookout for guineas, and adventurers on the lookout for weak-minded heiresses; duchesses writing letters in the most doubtful English, and chairmen swearing at any one who dared to walk home on foot at night.

No doubt the Life of Beau Nash was a bookseller's book; and it was made as attractive as possible by the recapitulation of all sorts of romantic stories about Miss S——n, and Mr. C——e, and Captain K——g; but throughout we find the historian very much inclined to laugh at his hero, and only refraining now and again in order to record in serious language traits indicative of the real goodness of disposition of that fop and gambler. And the fine ladies and gentlemen, who lived in that atmosphere of scandal, and intrigue, and gambling, are also from time to time treated to a little decorous and respectful raillery. Who does not remember the famous laws of polite breeding written out by Mr. Nash—Gol[illegible]h hints that neither Mr. Nash nor his fair correspondent at Blenheim, the Duchess of Marlborough, excelled in English composition—for the guidance of the ladies and gentlemen who were under the sway of the King of Bath? "But were we to give laws to a nursery,

we should make them childish laws," Goldsmith writes gravely. "His statutes, though stupid, were addressed to fine gentlemen and ladies, and were probably received with sympathetic approbation. It is certain they were in general religiously observed by his subjects, and executed by him with impartiality; neither rank nor fortune shielded the refractory from his resentment." Nash, however, was not content with prose in enforcing good manners. Having waged deadly war against the custom of wearing boots, and having found his ordinary armoury of no avail against the obstinacy of the country squires, he assailed them in the impassioned language of poetry, and produced the following "Invitation to the Assembly," which, as Goldsmith remarks, was highly relished by the nobility at Bath on account of its keenness, severity, and particularly its good rhymes.

"Come, one and all, to Hoyden Hall,
For there's the assembly this night
None but prude fools
Mind manners and rules;
We Hoydens do decency slight.
Come, trollops and slatterns,
Cocked hats and white aprons,
This best our modesty suits;
For why should not we
In dress be as free
As Hogs-Norton squires in boots?"

The sarcasm was too much for the squires, who yielded in a body; and when any stranger through inadvertence presented himself in the assembly-rooms in boots, Nash was so completely master of the situation that he would politely step up to the intruder and suggest that he had forgotten his horse.

Goldsmith does not magnify the intellectual capacity of his hero; but he gives him credit for a sort of rude wit that was sometimes effective enough. His physician, for example, having called on him to see whether he had followed a prescription that had been sent him the previous day, was greeted in this fashion: "Followed your prescription? No. Egad, if I had, I should have broken my neck, for I flung it out of the two pair of stairs window." For the rest, this diverting biography contains some excellent warnings against the vice of gambling; with a particular account of the manner in which the Government of the day tried by statute after statute to suppress the tables at Tunbridge and Bath, thereby only driving the sharpers to new subterfuges. That the Beau was in alliance with sharpers, or, at least, that he was a sleeping partner in the firm, his biographer admits; but it is urged on his behalf that he was the most generous of winners, and again and again interfered to prevent the ruin of some gambler by whose folly he would himself have profited. His constant charity was well known; the money so lightly come by was at the disposal of any one who

could prefer a piteous tale. Moreover he made no scruple about exacting from others that charity which they could well afford. One may easily guess who was the duchess mentioned in the following story of Goldsmith's narration:

"The sums he gave and collected for the Hospital were great, and his manner of doing it was no less admirable. I am told that he was once collecting money in Wiltshire's room for that purpose, when a lady entered, who is more remarkable for her wit than her charity, and not being able to pass him by unobserved, she gave him a pat with her fan, and said, 'You must put down a trifle for me, Nash, for I have no money in my pocket.' 'Yes, madam,' says he, 'that I will with pleasure, if your grace will tell me when to stop;' then taking an handful of guineas out of his pocket, he began to tell them into his white hat—'One, two, three, four, five——' 'Hold, hold!' says the duchess, 'consider what you are about.' 'Consider your rank and fortune, madam,' says Nash, and continues telling—'six, seven, eight, nine, ten.' Here the duchess called again, and seemed angry. 'Pray compose yourself, madam,' cried Nash, 'and don't interrupt the work of charity—eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen.' Here the duchess stormed, and caught hold of his hand. 'Peace, madam,' says Nash, 'you shall have your name written in letters of gold, madam, and upon the front of the building, madam—sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty.' 'I won't pay a farthing more,' says the duchess. 'Charity hides a multitude of sins,' replies Nash—'twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five.' 'Nash,' says she, 'I protest you frighten me out of my wits. L—d, I shall die!' 'Madam, you will never die with doing good; and if you do, it will be the better for you,' answered Nash, and was about to proceed; but perceiving her grace had lost all patience, a parley ensued, when he, after much altercation, agreed to stop his hand and compound with her grace for thirty guineas. The duchess however, seemed displeased the whole evening, and when he came to the table where she was playing, bid him, 'Stand farther, an ugly devil, for she hated the sight of him.' But her grace afterwards having a run of good luck called Nash to her. 'Come,' says she, "I will be friends with you, though you are a fool; and to let you see I am not angry, there is ten guineas more for your charity. But this I insist on, that neither my name nor the sum shall be mentioned.'"

At the ripe age of eighty-seven the "beau of three generations" breathed his last (1761); and, though he had fallen into poor ways, there were those alive who remembered his former greatness, and who chronicled it in a series of epitaphs and poetical lamentations. "One thing is common almost with all of them," says Goldsmith, "and that is that Venus, Cupid, and the Graces are commanded to weep, and that Bath shall never find such another." These effusions are forgotten now; and so would Beau Nash be also but for this biography, which, no doubt meant merely for the book-market of the day, lives and is of permanent value by reason of the

charm of its style, its pervading humour, and the vivacity of its descriptions of the fashionable follies of the eighteenth century. *Nullum fere genus scribendi non tetigit. Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit.* Who but Goldsmith could have written so delightful a book about such a poor creature as Beau Nash?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ARREST.

It was no doubt owing to Newbery that Goldsmith, after his return to London, was induced to abandon, temporarily or altogether, his apartments in Wine-Office Court, and take lodgings in the house of a Mrs. Fleming, who lived somewhere or other in Islington. Newbery had rooms in Canonbury House, a curious old building that still exists; and it may have occurred to the publisher that Goldsmith, in this suburban district, would not only be nearer him for consultation and so forth, but also might pay more attention to his duties than when he was among the temptations of Fleet Street. Goldsmith was working industriously in the service of Newbery at this time (1763–4); in fact, so completely was the bookseller in possession of the hack, that Goldsmith's board and lodging in Mrs. Fleming's house, arranged for at £50 a year, was paid by Newbery himself. Writing prefaces, revising new editions, contributing reviews—this was the sort of work he undertook, with more or less content, as the equivalent of the modest sums Mr. Newbery disbursed for him or handed over as pocket-money. In the midst of all this drudgery he was now secretly engaged on work that aimed at something higher that mere payment of bed and board. The smooth lines of the *Traveller* were receiving further polish; the gentle-natured *Vicar* was writing his simple, quaint, tender story. And no doubt Goldsmith was spurred to try something better than hack-work by the associations that he was now forming, chiefly under the wise and benevolent friendship of Johnson.

Anxious always to be thought well of, he was now beginning to meet people whose approval was worthy of being sought. He had been introduced to Reynolds. He had become the friend of Hogarth. He had even made the acquaintance of Mr. Boswell, from Scotland. Moreover, he had been invited to become one of the originals members of the famous Club of which so much has been written; his fellow-members being Reynolds, Johnson, Burke, Hawkins, Beauclerk, Bennet Langton, and Dr. Nugent. It is almost certain that it was at Johnson's instigation that he had been admitted into this choice fellowship. Long before either the *Traveller* or the *Vicar* had been heard of, Johnson had perceived the literary genius that obscurely burned in the uncouth figure of this

Irishman, and was anxious to impress on others Goldsmith's claims to respect and consideration. In the minute record kept by Boswell of his first evening with Johnson at the Mitre Tavern, we find Johnson saying, "Dr. Goldsmith is one of the first men we now have as an author, and he is a very worthy man too. He has been loose in his principles, but he is coming right." Johnson took walks with Goldsmith; did him the honour of disputing with him on all occasions; bought a copy of the *Life of Nash* when it appeared—an unusual compliment for one author to pay another, in their day or in ours; allowed him to call on Miss Williams, the blind old lady in Bolt Court; and generally was his friend, counsellor, and champion. Accordingly, when Mr. Boswell entertained the great Cham to supper at the Mitre—a sudden quarrel with his landlord having made it impossible for him to order the banquet at his own house—he was careful to have Dr. Goldsmith of the company. His guests that evening were Johnson, Goldsmith, Davies (the actor and bookseller who had conferred on Boswell the invaluable favor of an introduction to Johnson), Mr. Eccles, and the Rev. Mr. Ogilvie, a Scotch poet who deserves our gratitude because it was his inopportune patriotism that provoked, on this very evening, the memorable epigram about the high-road leading to England. "Goldsmith," says Boswell, who had not got over his envy at Goldsmith's being allowed to visit the blind old pensioner in Bolt Court, "as usual, endeavoured with too much eagerness to *shine*, and disputed very warmly with Johnson against the well-known maxim of the British constitution, 'The king can do no wrong.'" It was a dispute not so much about facts as about phraseology; and, indeed, there seems to be no great warmth in the expressions used on either side. Goldsmith affirmed that "what was morally false could not be politically true;" and that, in short, the king could by the misuse of his regal power do wrong. Johnson replied, that, in such a case, the immediate agents of the king were the persons to be tried and punished for the offence. "The king, though he should command, cannot force a judge to condemn a man unjustly; therefore it is the judge whom we prosecute and punish." But when he stated that the king "is above every thing, and there is no power by which he can be tried," he was surely forgetting an important chapter in English history. "What did Cromwell do for his country?" he himself asked, during his subsequent visit to Scotland, of old Auchinleck, Boswell's father. "God, Doctor," replied the vile Whig, "*he garred kings ken they had a lith in their necks.*'

For some time after this evening Goldsmith drops out of Boswell's famous memoir; perhaps the compiler was not anxious to give him too much prominence. They had not liked each other from the outset. Boswell, vexed by the greater intimacy of Goldsmith with Johnson, called him a blunderer, a feather-brained person, and described his appearance in no flattering terms. Goldsmith, on the other hand, on being asked who was this Scotch cur that followed Johnson's heels, answered. "He is not a cur: you

are too severe—he is only a bur. Tom Davis flung him at Johnson in sport, and he has the faculty of sticking." Boswell would probably have been more tolerant of Goldsmith as a rival, if he could have known that on a future day he was to have Johnson all to himself—to carry him to remote wilds and exhibit him as a portentous literary phenomenon to Highland lairds. It is true that Johnson, at an early period of his acquaintance with Boswell, did talk vaguely about a trip to the Hebrides; but the young Scotch idolater thought it was all too good to be true. The mention of Sir James Macdonald, says Boswell, "led us to talk of the Western Islands of Scotland, to visit which he expressed a wish that then appeared to me a very romantic fancy, which I little thought would be afterwards realized. He told me that his father had put Martin's account of those islands into his hands when he was very young, and that he was highly pleased with it; that he was particularly struck with the St. Kilda man's notion that the High Church of Glasgow had been hollowed out of a rock; a circumstance to which old Mr. Johnson had directed his attention. Unfortunately Goldsmith not only disappears from the pages of Boswell's biography at this time, but also in great measure from the ken of his companions. He was deeply in debt; no doubt the fine clothes he had been ordering from Mr. Filby in order that he might "shine" among those notable persons, had something to do with it; he had tried the patience of the booksellers: and he had been devoting a good deal of time to work not intended to elicit immediate payment. The most patient endeavors to trace out his changes of lodgings, and the fugitive writings that kept him in daily bread, have not been very successful. It is to be presumed that Goldsmith had occasionally to go into hiding to escape from his creditors, and so was missed from his familiar haunts. We only reach daylight again, to find Goldsmith being under threat of arrest from his landlady; and for the particulars of this famous affair it is necessary to return to Boswell.

Boswell was not in London at that time; but his account was taken down subsequently from Johnson's narration: and his accuracy in other matters, his extraordinary memory, and scrupulous care, leave no doubt in the mind that his version of the story is to be preferred to those of Mrs. Piozzi and Sir John Hawkins. We may take it that these are Johnson's own words: "I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and, as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its

merit; told the landlady I should soon return; and, having gone to a bookseller, sold it for £60. I brought Goldsmith the money. and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill."

We do not know who this landlady was—it cannot now be made out whether the incident occurred at Islington, or in the rooms that Goldsmith partially occupied in the Temple; but even if Mrs. Fleming be the landlady in question, she was deserving neither of Goldsmith's rating nor of the reprimands that have been bestowed upon her by later writers. Mrs. Fleming had been exceedingly kind to Goldsmith. Again and again in her bills we find items significantly marked £0 0*s.* 0*d.* And if her accounts with her lodger did get hopelessly into arrear; and if she was annoyed by seeing him go out in fine clothes to sup at the Mitre; and if, at length, her patience gave way, and she determined to have her rights in one way or another, she was no worse than landladies—who are only human beings, and not divinely appointed protectresses of genius—ordinarily are. Mrs. Piozzi says that when Johnson came back with the money, Goldsmith "called the woman of the house directly to partake of punch, and pass their time in merriment." This would be a dramatic touch; but, after Johnson's quietly corking the bottle of Madeira, it is more likely that no such thing occurred; especially as Boswell quotes the statement as an "extreme inaccuracy."

The novel which Johnson had taken away and sold to Francis Newbery, a nephew of the elder bookseller, was, as every one knows, the *Vicar of Wakefield.* That Goldsmith, amidst all his pecuniary distresses, should have retained this piece in his desk, instead of pawning or promising it to one of his bookselling patrons, points to but one conclusion—that he was building high hopes on it, and was determined to make it as good as lay within his power. Goldsmith put an anxious finish into all his better work; perhaps that is the secret of the graceful ease that is now apparent in every line. Any young writer who may imagine that the power of clear and concise literary expression comes by nature, cannot do better than study, in Mr. Cunningham's big collection of Goldsmith's writings, the continual and minute alterations which the author considered necessary even after the first edition—sometimes when the second and third editions—had been published. Many of these, especially in the poetical works, were merely improvements in sound as suggested by a singularly sensitive ear, as when he altered the line

"Amidst the ruin, heedless of the dead,"

which had appeared in the first three editions of the *Traveller*, into

"There in the ruin, heedless of the dead,"

which appeared in the fourth. But the majority of the omissions

and corrections were prompted by a careful taste, that abhorred everything redundant or slovenly. It has been suggested that when Johnson carried off the *Vicar of Wakefield* to Francis Newbery, the manuscript was not quite finished, but had to be completed afterwards. There was at least plenty of time for that. Newbery does not appear to have imagined that he had obtained a prize in the lottery of literature. He paid the £60 for it—clearly on the assurance of the great father of learning of the day, that there was merit in the little story—somewhere about the end of 1764; but the tale was not issued to the public until March, 1766. "And, sir," remarked Johnson to Boswell, with regard to the sixty pounds, "a sufficient price, too, when it was sold; for then the fame of Goldsmith had not been elevated, as it afterwards was, by his *Traveller;* and the bookseller had such faint hopes of profit by his bargain, that he kept the manuscript by him a long time, and did not publish it till after the *Traveller* had appeared. Then, to be sure, it was accidentally worth more money."

CHAPTER IX.

THE TRAVELLER.

THIS poem of the *Traveller*, the fruit of much secret labour and the consummation of the hopes of many years, was lying completed in Goldsmith's desk when the incident of the arrest occurred; and the elder Newbery had undertaken to publish it. Then, as at other times, Johnson lent this wayward child of genius a friendly hand. He read over the proof-sheets for Goldsmith; was so kind as to put in a line here or there where he thought fit; and prepared a notice of the poem for the *Critical Review*. The time for the appearance of this new claimant for poetical honours was propitious. "There was perhaps no point in the century," says Professor Masson, "when the British Muse, such as she had come to be, was doing less, or had so nearly ceased to do anything, or to have any good opinion of herself, as precisely about the year 1764. Young was dying; Gray was recluse and indolent; Johnson had long given over his metrical experimentations on any except the most inconsiderable scale; Akenside, Armstrong, Smollett, and others less known, had pretty well revealed the amount of their worth in poetry; and Churchill, after his ferocious blaze of what was really rage and declamation in metre, though conventionally it was called poetry, was prematurely defunct. Into this lull came Goldsmith's short but carefully finished poem." "There has not been so fine a poem since Pope's time," remarked Johnson to Boswell, on the very first evening after the return of young Auchinleck to London. It would have been no matter for surprise had Goldsmith dedicated this first work that he published under his own name to Johnson, who had for so long been his constant friend and adviser; and such a dedication would have carried weight in certain quarters. But there was a finer touch in Goldsmith's thought of inscribing the book to his brother Henry: and no doubt the public were surprised and pleased to find a poor devil of an author dedicating a work to an Irish parson with £40 a year, from whom he could not well expect any return. It will be remembered that it was to this brother Henry that Goldsmith, ten years before, had sent the first sketch of the poem; and now the wanderer,

> "Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,"

declares how his heart untravelled

"Still to my brother turns, with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain."

The very first line of the poem strikes a key-note—there is in it a pathetic thrill of distance, and regret, and longing; and it has the soft musical sound that pervades the whole composition. It is exceedingly interesting to note, as has already been mentioned, how Goldsmith altered and altered these lines until he had got them full of gentle vowel sounds. Where, indeed, in the English language could one find more graceful melody than this?—

"The naked negro, panting at the line,
Boasts of his golden sands and palmy wine,
Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave,
And thanks his gods for all the good they gave."

It has been observed also that Goldsmith was the first to introduce into English poetry sonorous American—or rather Indian—names, as when he writes in this poem,

"Where wild Oswego spreads her swamps around.
And Niagara stuns with thundering sound;"

and if it be charged against him that he ought to have known the proper accentuation of Niagara, it may be mentioned as a set-off that Sir Walter Scott, in dealing with his own country, mis-accentuated "Glenaládale," to say nothing of his having made of Roseneath an island. Another characteristic of the *Traveller* is the extraordinary choiceness and conciseness of the diction, which, instead of suggesting pedantry or affectation, betrays on the contrary, nothing but a delightful ease and grace.

The English people are very fond of good English: and thus it is that couplets from the *Traveller* and the *Deserted Village* have come into the common stock of our language, and that sometimes not so much on account of the ideas they convey, as through their singular precision of epithet and musical sound. It is enough to make the angels weep to find such a couplet as this,

"Cheerful at morn, he wakes from short repose,
Breasts the keen air, and carols as he goes,"

murdered in several editions of Goldsmith's works by the substitution of the commonplace "breathes" for "breasts"—and that after Johnson had drawn particular attention to the line by quoting it in his dictionary. Perhaps, indeed, it may be admitted that the literary charm of the *Traveller* is more apparent than the value of any doctrine, however profound or ingenious, which the poem was supposed to inculcate. We forget all about the "particular principle of happiness" possessed by each European state, in listening to the melody of the singer, and in watching the successive and delightful pictures that he calls up before the imagination.

As in those domes where Cæsars once bore sway,
Defaced by time, and tottering in decay,
There in the ruin, heedless of the dead,
The shelter-seeking peasant builds his shed ;
And, wondering man could want the larger pile,
Exults, and owns his cottage with a smile."

Then notice the blaze of patriotic idealism that bursts forth when he comes to talk of England. What sort of England had he been familiar with when he was consorting with the meanest wretches—the poverty-stricken, the sick, and squalid—in those Fleet-street dens ? But it is an England of bright streams and spacious lawns of which he writes ; and as for the people who inhabit the favoured land—

" Stern o'er each bosom reason holds her state,
With daring aims irregularly great ;
Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
I see the lords of human kind pass by."

" Whenever I write any thing," Goldsmith had said, with a humorous exaggeration which Boswell, as usual, takes *au serieux*, " the public *make a point* to know nothing about it." But we have Johnson's testimony to the fact that the *Traveller* " brought him into high reputation." No wonder. When the great Cham declares it to be the finest poem published since the time of Pope, we are irresistibly forced to think of the *Essay on Man*. What a contrast there is between that tedious and stilted effort and this clear burst of bird-song! The *Traveller*, however, did not immediately become popular, It was largely talked about, naturally, among Goldsmith's friends ; and Johnson would scarcely suffer any criticism of it. At a dinner given long afterwards at Sir Joshua Reynolds's and fully reported by the invaluable Boswell, Reynolds remarked, " I was glad to hear Charles Fox say it was one of the finest poems in the English language." " Why were you glad ? " said Langton. " You surely had no doubt of this before ? " Hereupon Johnson struck in : " No ; the merit of the *Traveller* is so well established, that Mr. Fox's praise cannot augment it nor his censure diminish it." And he went on to say—Goldsmith having died and got beyond the reach of all critics and creditors some three or four years before this time—" Goldsmith was a man who, whatever he wrote, did it better than any other man could do. He deserved a place in Westminster Abbey ; and every year he lived would have deserved it better."

Presently people began to talk about the new poem. A second edition was issued; a third ; a fourth. It is not probable that Goldsmith gained any pecuniary benefit from the growing popularity of the little book; but he had "struck for honest fame," and that was now coming to him. He even made some slight acquaintance with " the great ; " and here occurs an incident which is one of many that account for the love that the English people

have for Goldsmith. It appears that Hawkins, calling one day on the Earl of Northumberland, found the author of the *Traveller* waiting in the outer room, in response to an invitation. Hawkins, having finished his own business, retired, but lingered about until the interview between Goldsmith and his lordship was over, having some curiosity about the result. Here follows Goldsmith's report to Hawkins: "His lordship told me he had read my poem, and was much delighted with it; that he was going to be Lord-lieutenant of Ireland; and that, hearing that I was a native of that country, he should be glad to do me any kindness." "What did you answer?" says Hawkins, no doubt expecting to hear of some application for pension or post. "Why," said Goldsmith, "I could say nothing but that I had a brother there, a clergyman, that stood in need of help"—and then he explained to Hawkins that he looked to the booksellers for support, and was not inclined to place dependence on the promises of great men. "Thus did this idiot in the affairs of the world," adds Hawkins, with a fatuity that is quite remarkable in its way, "trifle with his fortunes, and put back the hand that was held out to assist him! Other offers of a like kind he either rejected or failed to improve, contenting himself with the patronage of one nobleman, whose mansion afforded him the delights of a splendid table and a retreat for a few days from the metropolis." It is a great pity we have not a description from the same pen of Johnson's insolent ingratitude in flinging the pair of boots downstairs.

CHAPTER X.

MISCELLANEOUS WRITING.

BUT one pecuniary result of this growing fame was a joint offer on the part of Griffin and Newbery of £20 for a selection from his printed essays; and this selection was forthwith made and published with a preface written for the occasion. Here at once we can see that Goldsmith takes firmer ground. There is an air of confidence —of gayety, even—in his address to the public; although, as usual, accompanied by a whimsical mock-modesty that is extremely odd and effective. "Whatever right I have to complain of the public," he says, "they can, as yet, have no just reason to complain of me. If I have written dull Essays, they have hitherto treated them as dull Essays. Thus far we are at least upon par, and until they think fit to make me their humble debtor by praise, I am resolved not to lose a single inch of my self-importance. Instead, therefore, of attempting to establish a credit amongst them, it will perhaps be wiser to apply to some more distant correspondent; and as my drafts are in some danger of being protested at home, it may not be imprudent, upon this occasion, to draw my bills upon Posterity.

"MR. POSTERITY,

"SIR: Nine hundred and ninety-nine years after sight hereof pay the bearer, or order, a thousand pounds' worth of praise, free from all deductions whatsoever, it being a commodity that will then be very serviceable to him, and place it to the account of, etc."

The bill is not yet due; but there can in the meantime be no harm in discounting it so far as to say that these Essays deserve very decided praise. They deal with all manner of topics, matters of fact, matters of imagination, humorous descriptions, learned criticisms; and then, whenever the entertainer thinks he is becoming dull, he suddenly tells a quaint little story and walks off amidst the laughter he knows he has produced. It is not a very ambitious or sonorous sort of literature; but it was admirably fitted for its aim — the passing of the immediate hour in an agreeable and fairly intellectual way. One can often see, no doubt, that these Essays are occasionally written in a more or less perfunctory fashion, the writer

not being moved by much enthusiasm in his subject; but even then a quaint literary grace seldom fails to atone, as when, writing about the English Clergy, and complaining that they do not sufficiently in their addresses stoop to mean capacities, he says: "Whatever may become of the higher orders of mankind, who are generally possessed of collateral motives to virtue, the vulgar should be particularly regarded, whose behaviour in civil life is totally hinged upon their hopes and fears. Those who constitute the basis of the great fabric of society shonld be particularly regarded; for in policy, as in architecture, ruin is most fatal when it begins from the bottom." There was, indeed, throughout Goldsmith's miscellaneous writing much more common sense than might have been expected from a writer who was supposed to have none.

As regards his chance criticisms on dramatic and poetical literature, these are generally found to be incisive and just; while sometimes they exhibit a wholesome disregard of mere tradition and authority. "Milton's translation of Horace's Ode to Pyrrha," he says, for example, "is universally known and generally admired, in our opinion much above its merit." If the present writer might for a moment venture into such an arena, he would express the honest belief that that translation is the very worst translation that was ever made of any thing. But there is the happy rendering of *simplex munditiis*, which counts for much.

By this time Goldsmith had also written his charming ballad of *Edwin and Angelina*, which was privately "printed for the amusement of the Countess of Northumberland," and which afterwards appeared in the *Vicar of Wakefield.* It seems clear enough that this quaint and pathetic piece was suggested by an old ballad beginning,

> "Gentle herdsman, tell to me,
> Of curtesy I thee pray,
> Unto the towne of Walsingham
> Which is the right and ready way,

which Percy had shown to Goldsmith, and which, patched up, subsequently appeared in the *Reliques*. But Goldsmith's ballad is original enough to put aside all the discussion about plagiarism which was afterwards started. In the old fragment the weeping pilgrim receives directions from the herdsman, and goes on her way, and we hear of her no more; in *Edwin and Angelina* the forlorn and despairing maiden suddenly finds herself confronted by the long-lost lover whom she had so cruelly used. This is the dramatic touch that reveals the hand of the artist. And here again it is curious to note the care with which Goldsmith repeatedly revised his writings. The ballad originally ended with these two stanzas:

> "Here amidst sylvan bowers we'll rove,
> From lawn to woodland stray;
> Blest as the songsters of the grove,
> And innocent as they.

"To all that want, and all that wail,
Our pity shall be given,
And when this life of love shall fail,
We'll love again in heaven."

But subsequently it must have occurred to the author that, the dramatic disclosure once made, and the lovers restored to each other, any lingering over the scene only weakened the force of the climax; hence these stanzas were judiciously excised. It may be doubted, however, whether the original version of the last couplet,

"And the last sigh that rends the heart
Shall break thy Edwin's too."

was improved by being altered into

"The sigh that rends thy constant heart
Shall break thy Edwin's too."

Meanwhile Goldsmith had resorted to hack-work again; nothing being expected from the *Vicar of Wakefield*, now lying in Newbery's shop, for that had been paid for, and his expenses were increasing, as became his greater station. In the interval between the publication of the *Traveller* and of the *Vicar*, he moved into better chambers in Garden Court; he hired a man-servant, he blossomed out into very fine clothes. Indeed, so effective did his first suit seem to be—the purple silk small-clothes, the scarlet roquelaure, the wig, sword, and gold-headed cane—that, as Mr. Forster says, he "amazed his friends with no less than three similar suits, not less expensive, in the next six months." Part of this display was no doubt owing to a suggestion from Reynolds that Goldsmith, having a medical degree, might just as well add the practice of a physician to his literary work, to magnify his social position. Goldsmith, always willing to please his friends, acceded; but his practice does not appear to have been either extensive or long-continued. It is said that he drew out a prescription for a certain Mrs. Sidebotham which so appalled the apothecary, that he refused to make it up; and that, as the lady sided with the apothecary, he threw up the case and his profession at the same time. If it was money Goldsmith wanted, he was not likely to get it in that way; he had neither the appearance nor the manner fitted to humour the sick and transform healthy people into valetudinarians. If it was the esteem of his friends and popularity outside that circle, he was soon to acquire enough of both. On the 27th March, 1766, fifteen months after the appearance of the *Traveller*, the *Vicar of Wakefield* was published.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD.

THE *Vicar of Wakefield*, considered structurally, follows the lines of the Book of Job. You take a good man, overwhelm him with successive misfortunes, show the pure flame of his soul burning in the midst of the darkness, and then, as the reward of his patience and fortitude and submission, restore him gradually to happiness, with even larger flocks and herds than before. The machinery by which all this is brought about is, in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, the weak part of the story. The plot is full of wild improbabilities; in fact, the expedients by which all the members of the family are brought together and made happy at the same time, are nothing short of desperate. It is quite clear, too, that the author does not know what to make of the episode of Olivia and her husband; they are allowed to drop through; we leave him playing the French horn at a relation's house; while she, in her father's home, is supposed to be unnoticed, so much are they all taken up with the rejoicings over the double wedding. It is very probable that when Goldsmith began the story he had no very definite plot concocted; and that it was only when the much-persecuted Vicar had to be restored to happiness, that he found the entanglements surrounding him, and had to make frantic efforts to break through them. But, be that as it may, it is not for the plot that people now read the *Vicar of Wakefield;* it is not the intricacies of the story that have made it the delight of the world. Surely human nature must be very much the same when this simple description of a quiet English home went straight to the heart of nations in both hemispheres.

And the wonder is that Goldsmith of all men should have produced such a perfect picture of domestic life. What had his own life been but a moving about between garret and tavern, between bachelor's lodgings and clubs? Where had he seen—unless, indeed, he looked back through the mist of years to the scenes of his childhood—all this gentle government, and wise blindness; all this affection, and consideration, and respect? There is as much human nature in the character of the Vicar alone as would have furnished any fifty of the novels of that day, or of this. Who has not been charmed by his sly and quaint humour, by his moral dignity and simple vanities, even by the little secrets he reveals to us of his paternal rule. "'Ay,' returned I, not knowing well what

to think of the matter, 'heaven grant they may be both the better for it this day three months!' This was one of those observations I usually made to impress my wife with an opinion of my sagacity; for if the girls succeeded, then it was a pious wish fulfilled; but if any thing unfortunate ensued, then it might be looked on as a prophecy." We know how Miss Olivia was answered, when, at her mother's prompting, she set up for being well skilled in controversy:

"'Why, my dear, what controversy can she have read?' cried I. 'It does not occur to me that I ever put such books into her hands: you certainly overrate her merit.'—'Indeed, papa,' replied Olivia, 'she does not; I have read a great deal of controversy. I have read the disputes between Thwackum and Square; the controversy between Robinson Crusoe and Friday, the savage; and I am now employed in reading the controversy in Religious Courtship.'—'Very well,' cried I, 'that's a good girl; I find you are perfectly qualified for making converts, and so go help your mother to make the gooseberry pie.'"

It is with a great gentleness that the good man reminds his wife and daughters that, after their sudden loss of fortune, it does not become them to wear much finery. "The first Sunday, in particular, their behaviour served to mortify me. I had desired my girls the preceding night to be dressed early the next day; for I always loved to be at church a good while before the rest of the congregation. They punctually obeyed my directions; but when we were to assemble in the morning at breakfast, down came my wife and daughters, dressed out in all their former splendour: their hair plastered up with pomatum, their faces patched to taste, their trains bundled up in a heap behind, and rustling at every motion. I could not help smiling at their vanity, particularly that of my wife, from whom I expected more discretion. In this exigence, therefore, my only resource was to order my son, with an important air, to call our coach. The girls were amazed at the command; but I repeated it with more solemnity than before. 'Surely, my dear, you jest,' cried my wife; 'we can walk it perfectly well: we want no coach to carry us now.'—'You mistake, child,' returned I, 'we do want a coach; for if we walk to church in this trim, the very children in the parish will hoot after us.'—'Indeed,' replied my wife, 'I always imagined that my Charles was fond of seeing his children neat and handsome about him.'—'You may be as neat as you please,' interrupted I, 'and I shall love you the better for it; but all this is not neatness, but frippery. These rufflings, and pinkings, and patchings will only make us hated by all the wives of our neighbours. No, my children,' continued I, more gravely, 'those gowns may be altered into something of a plainer cut; for finery is very unbecoming in us, who want the means of decency. I do not know whether such flouncing and shredding is becoming even in the rich, if we consider, upon a moderate calculation, that the nakedness of the indigent world might be clothed from the trimmings of the vain.'

"This remonstrance had the proper effect: they went with great composure, that very instant, to change their dress; and the next day I had the satisfaction of finding my daughters, at their own request, employed in cutting up their trains into Sunday waistcoats for Dick and Bill the two little ones; and, what was still more satisfactory, the gowns seemed improved by this curtailing." And again, when he discovered the two girls making a wash for their faces: "My daughters seemed equally busy with the rest; and I observed them for a good while cooking something over the fire. I at first supposed they were assisting their mother, but little Dick informed me in a whisper that they were making a wash for the face. Washes of all kinds I had a natural antipathy to; for I knew that, instead of mending the complexion, they spoil it. I therefore approached my chair by sly degrees to the fire, and grasping the poker, as if it wanted mending, seemingly by accident overturned the whole composition, and it was too late to begin another."

All this is done with such a light, homely touch, that one gets familiarly to know these people without being aware of it. There is no insistance. There is no dragging you along by the collar; confronting you with certain figures; and compelling you to look at this and study that. The artist stands by you, and laughs in his quiet way; and you are laughing too, when suddenly you find that human beings have silently come into the void before you; and you know them for friends; and even after the vision has faded away, and the beautiful light and colour and glory of romance-land have vanished, you cannot forget them. They have become part of your life; you will take them to the grave with you.

The story, as every one perceives, has its obvious blemishes. "There are an hundred faults in this thing," says Goldsmith himself, in the prefixed Advertisement. But more particularly, in the midst of all the impossibilities taking place in and around the jail, when that chameleon-like *deus ex machinâ*, Mr. Jenkinson, winds up the tale in hot haste, Goldsmith pauses to put in a sort of apology. "Nor can I go on without a reflection," he says gravely, "on those accidental meetings, which, though they happen every day, seldom excite our surprise but upon some extraordinary occasion. To what a fortuitous concurrence do we not owe every pleasure and convenience of our lives! How many seeming accidents must unite before we can be clothed or fed! The peasant must be disposed to labour, the shower must fall, the wind fill the merchant's sail, or numbers must want the usual supply." This is Mr. Thackeray's "simple rogue" appearing again in adult life. Certainly, if our supply of food and clothing depended on such accidents as happened to make the Vicar's family happy all at once, there would be a good deal of shivering and starvation in the world. Moreover it may be admitted that on occasion Goldsmith's fine instinct deserts him; and even in describing those domestic relations which are the charm of the novel, he blunders into the unnatural. When Mr. Burchell, for example, leaves the house in consequence of a quarrel with Mrs. Primrose, the Vicar

questions his daughter as to whether she had received from that poor gentleman any testimony of his affection for her. She replies No; but remembers to have heard him remark that he never knew a woman who could find merit in a man that was poor. "Such, my dear," continued the Vicar, "is the common cant of all the unfortunate or idle. But I hope you have been taught to judge properly of such men, and that it would be even madness to expect happiness from one who has been so very bad an economist of his own. Your mother and I have no better prospects for you. The next winter, which you will probably spend in town, will give you opportunities of making a more prudent choice." Now it is not at all likely that a father, however anxious to have his daughter well married and settled, would ask her so delicate a question in open domestic circle, and would then publicly inform her that she was expected to choose a husband on her forthcoming visit to town.

Whatever may be said about any particular incident like this, the atmosphere of the book is true. Goethe, to whom a German translation of the *Vicar* was read by Herder some four years after the publication in England, not only declared it at the time to be one of the best novels ever written, but again and again throughout his life reverted to the charm and delight with which he had made the acquaintance of the English "prose idyll," and took it for granted that it was a real picture of English life. Despite all the machinery of Mr. Jenkinson's schemes, who could doubt it? Again and again there are recurrent strokes of such vividness and naturalness that we yield altogether to the necromancer. Look at this perfect picture—of human emotion and outside nature—put in in a few sentences. The old clergyman, after being in search of his daughter, has found her, and is now—having left her in an inn—returning to his family and his home. "And now my heart caught new sensations of pleasure, the nearer I approached that peaceful mansion. As a bird that had been frighted from its nest my affections outwent my haste, and hovered round my little fireside with all the rapture of expectation. I called up the many fond things I had to say, and anticipated the welcome I was to receive. I already felt my wife's tender embrace, and smiled at the joy of my little ones. As I walked but slowly, the night waned apace. The labourers of the day were all retired to rest; the lights were out in every cottage; no sounds were heard but of the shrilling cock, and the deep-mouthed watch-dog at hollow distance. I approached my little abode of pleasure, and, before I was within a furlong of the place, our honest mastiff came running to welcome me." "*The deep-mouthed watch-dog at hollow distance*"—what more perfect description of the stillness of night was even given?

And then there are other qualities in this delightful *Vicar of Wakefield* than merely idyllic tenderness, and pathos, and sly humour. There is a firm presentation of the crimes and brutalities of the world. The pure light that shines within that domestic circle is all the brighter because of the black outer ring that is here and

there indicated rather than described. How could we appreciate all the simplicities of the good man's household, but for the rogueries with which they are brought in contact? And although we laugh at Moses and his gross of green spectacles, and the manner in which the Vicar's wife and daughter are imposed on by Miss Wilhelmina Skeggs and Lady Blarney, with their lords and ladies and their tributes to virtue, there is no laughter demanded of us when we find the simplicity and moral dignity of the Vicar meeting and beating the jeers and taunts of the abandoned wretches in the prison. This is really a remarkable episode. The author was under the obvious temptation to make much comic material out of the situation; while another temptation, towards the goody-goody side, was not far off. But the Vicar undertakes the duty of reclaiming these castaways with a modest patience and earnestness in every way in keeping with his character; while they, on the other hand, are not too easily moved to tears of repentance. His first efforts, it will be remembered, were not too successful. "Their insensibility excited my highest compassion, and blotted my own uneasiness from my mind. It even appeared a duty incumbent upon me to attempt to reclaim them. I resolved, therefore, once more to return, and, in spite of their contempt, to give them my advice, and conquer them by my perseverance. Going, therefore, among them again, I informed Mr. Jenkinson of my design, at which he laughed heartily, but communicated it to the rest. The proposal was received with the greatest good-humour, as it promised to afford a new fund of entertainment to persons who had now no other resource for mirth but what could be derived from ridicule or debauchery.

"I therefore read them a portion of the service with a loud, unaffected voice, and found my audience perfectly merry upon the occasion. Lewd whispers, groans of contrition burlesqued, winking and coughing, alternately excited laughter. However, I continued with my natural solemnity to read on, sensible that what I did might mend some, but could itself receive no contamination from any.

"After reading, I entered upon my exhortation, which was rather calculated at first to amuse them than to reprove. I previously observed, that no other motive but their welfare could induce me to this; that I was their fellow-prisoner, and now got nothing by preaching. I was sorry, I said, to hear them so very profane; because they got nothing by it, but might lose a great deal: 'For be assured, my friends,' cried I—'for you are my friends, however the world may disclaim your friendship—though you swore twelve thousand oaths in a day, it would not put one penny in your purse. Then what signifies calling every moment upon the devil, and courting his friendship, since you find how scurvily he uses you? He has given you nothing here, you find, but a mouthful of oaths and an empty belly; and, by the best accounts I have of him, he will give you nothing that's good hereafter.

"'If used ill in our dealings with one man, we naturally go

elsewhere. Were is not worth your while, then, just to try how you may like the usage of another master, who gives you fair promises at least to come to him? Surely, my friends, of all stupidity in the world, his must be the greatest, who, after robbing a house, runs to the thief-takers for protection. And yet, how are you more wise? You are all seeking comfort from one that has already betrayed you, applying to a more malicious being than any thief-taker of them all; for they only decoy and then hang you; but he decoys and hangs, and, what is worst of all, will not let you loose after the hangman has done.'

"When I had concluded, I received the compliments of my audience, some of whom came and shook me by the hand, swearing that I was a very honest fellow, and that they desired my further acquaintance. I therefore promised to repeat my lecture next day, and actually conceived some hopes of making a reformation here; for it had ever been my opinion, that no man was past the hour of amendment, every heart lying open to the shafts of reproof, if the archer could but take a proper aim."

His wife and children, naturally dissuading him from an effort which seemed to them only to bring ridicule upon him, are met by a grave rebuke; and on the next morning he descends to the common prison, where, he says, he found the prisoners very merry, expecting his arrival, and each prepared to play some jail-trick on the Doctor.

"There was one whose trick gave more universal pleasure than all the rest; for, observing the manner in which I had disposed my books on the table before me, he very dexterously displaced one of them, and put an obscene jest-book of his own in the place. However, I took no notice of all that this mischievous group of little beings could do, but went on, perfectly sensible that what was ridiculous in my attempt would excite mirth only the first or second time, while what was serious would be permanent. My design succeeded, and in less than six days some were penitent, and all attentive.

"It was now that I applauded my perseverance and address, at thus giving sensibility to wretches divested of every moral feeling, and now began to think of doing them temporal services also, by rendering their situation somewhat more comfortable. Their time had hitherto been divided between famine and excess, tumultuous riot and bitter repining. Their only employment was quarrelling among each other, playing at cribbage, and cutting tobacco-stoppers. From this last mode of idle industry I took the hint of setting such as choose to work at cutting pegs for tobacconists and shoemakers, the proper wood being bought by a general subscription, and, when manufactured, sold by my appointment; so that each earned something every day—a trifle indeed, but sufficient to maintain him.

"I did not stop here, but instituted fines for the punishment of immorality, and rewards for peculiar industry. Thus, in less than a fortnight I had formed them into something social and humane,

and had the pleasure of regarding myself as a legislator who had brought men from their native ferocity into friendship and obedience."

Of course, all this about jails and thieves was calculated to shock the nerves of those who liked their literature perfumed with rose-water. Madame Riccoboni, to whom Burke had sent the book, wrote to Garrick, "Le plaidoyer en faveur des voleurs, des petits larrons, des gens de mauvaises mœurs, est fort éloigné de me plaire." Others, no doubt, considered the introduction of Miss Skeggs and Lady Blarney as "vastly low." But the curious thing is that the literary critics of the day seem to have been altogether silent about the book—perhaps they were "puzzled" by it, as Southey has suggested. Mr. Forster, who took the trouble to search the periodical literature of the time, says that, "apart from bald recitals of the plot, not a word was said in the way of criticism about the book, either in praise or blame." The *St. James's Chronicle* did not condescend to notice its appearance, and the *Monthly Review* confessed frankly that nothing was to be made of it. The better sort of newspapers, as well as the more dignified reviews, contemptuously left it to the patronage of *Lloyd's Evening Post*, the *London Chronicle*, and journals of that class; which simply informed their readers that a new novel, called the *Vicar of Wakefield*, had been published, that "the editor is Doctor Goldsmith, who has affixed his name to an introductory Advertisement, and that such and such were the incidents of the story." Even his friends, with the exception of Burke, did not seem to consider that any remarkable new birth in literature had occurred: and it is probable that this was a still greater disappointment to Goldsmith, who was so anxious to be thought well of at the Club. However, the public took to the story. A second edition was published in May; a third in August. Goldsmith, it is true, received no pecuniary gain from this success, for as we have seen, Johnson had sold the novel outright to Francis Newbery; but his name was growing in importance with the booksellers.

There was need that it should, for his increasing expenses—his fine clothes, his suppers, his whist at the Devil Tavern—were involving him in deeper and deeper difficulties. How was he to extricate himself?—or rather the question that would naturally occur to Goldsmith was how was he to continue that hand-to-mouth existence that had its compensations along with its troubles? Novels like the *Vicar of Wakefield* are not written at a moment's notice, even though any Newbery, judging by results, is willing to double that £60 which Johnson considered to be a fair price for the story at the time. There was the usual resource of hack-writing; and, no doubt, Goldsmith was compelled to fall back on that, if only to keep the elder Newbery, in whose debt he was, in a good humour. But the author of the *Vicar of Wakefield* may be excused if he looked round to see if there was not some more profitable work for him to turn his hand to. It was at this time that he began to think of writing a comedy.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GOOD-NATURED MAN.

AMID much miscellaneous work, mostly of the compilation order, the play of the *Good-natured Man* began to assume concrete form, insomuch that Johnson, always the friend of this erratic Irishman, had promised to write a Prologue for it. It is with regard to this prologue that Boswell tells a foolish and untrustworthy story about Goldsmith. Dr. Johnson had recently been honoured by an interview with his Sovereign; and the members of the Club were in the habit of flattering him by begging for a repetition of his account of that famous event. On one occasion, during this recital, Boswell relates, Goldsmith "remained unmoved upon a sofa at some distance, affecting not to join in the least in the eager curiosity of the company. He assigned as a reason for his gloom and seeming inattention that he apprehended Johnson had relinquished his purpose of furnishing him with a prologue to his play, with the hopes of which he had been flattered; but it was strongly suspected that he was fretting with chagrin and envy at the singular honour Doctor Johnson had lately enjoyed. At length the frankness and simplicity of his natural character prevailed. He sprang from the sofa, advanced to Johnson, and, in a kind of flutter, from imagining himself in the situation which he had just been hearing described, exclaimed, 'Well, you acquitted yourself in this conversation better than I should have done; for I should have bowed and stammered through the whole of it.'" It is obvious enough that the only part of this anecdote which is quite worthy of credence is the actual phrase used by Goldsmith, which is full of his customary generosity and self-depreciation. All those "suspicions" of his envy of his friend may safely be discarded, for they are mere guesswork; even though it might have been natural enough for a man like Goldsmith, conscious of his singular and original genius, to measure himself against Johnson, who was merely a man of keen perception and shrewd reasoning, and to compare the deference paid to Johnson with the scant courtesy shown to himself.

As a matter of fact, the Prologue was written by Dr. Johnson; and the now complete comedy was, after some little arrangement of personal differences between Goldsmith and Garrick, very

kindly undertaken by Reynolds, submitted for Garrick's approval. But nothing came of Reynolds's intervention. Perhaps Goldsmith resented Garrick's airs of patronage towards a poor devil of an author; perhaps Garrick was surprised by the manner in which well-intentioned criticisms were taken; at all events, after a good deal of shilly-shallying, the play was taken out of Garrick's hands. Fortunately, a project was just at this moment on foot for starting the rival theatre in Covent Garden, under the management of George Colman; and to Colman Goldsmith's play was forthwith consigned. The play was accepted; but it was a long time before it was produced; and in that interval it may fairly be presumed the *res angusta domi* of Goldsmith did not become any more free and generous than before. It was in this interval that the elder Newbery died; Goldsmith had one patron the less. Another patron who offered himself was civilly bowed to the door. This is an incident in Goldsmith's career which, like his interview with the Earl of Northumberland, should ever be remembered in his honour. The Government of the day were desirous of enlisting on their behalf the services of writers of somewhat better position than the mere libellers whose pens were the slaves of anybody's purse; and a Mr. Scott, a chaplain of Lord Sandwich, appears to have imagined that it would be worth while to buy Goldsmith. He applied to Goldsmith in due course; and this is an account of the interview: "I found him in a miserable set of chambers in the Temple. I told him my authority; I told him I was empowered to pay most liberally for his exertions; and, would you believe it! he was so absurd as to say, 'I can earn as much as will supply my wants without writing for any party; the assistance you offer is therefore unnecessary to me.' And I left him in his garret." Needy as he was, Goldsmith had too much self-respect to become a paid libeller and cutthroat of public reputations.

On the evening of Friday, the 29th of January, 1768, when Goldsmith had now reached the age of forty, the comedy of *The Good-natured Man* was produced at Covent Garden Theatre. The Prologue had, according to promise, been written by Johnson; and a very singular prologue it was. Even Boswell was struck by the odd contrast between this sonorous piece of melancholy and the fun that was to follow. "The first lines of this Prologue," he conscientiously remarks, "are strongly characteristical of the dismal gloom of his mind; which, in his case, as in the case of all who are distressed with the same malady of imagination, transfers to others its own feelings. Who could suppose it was to introduce a comedy, when Mr. Bensley solemnly began—

> "'Pressed with the load of life, the weary mind
> Surveys the general toil of humankind'?

But this dark ground might make Goldsmith's humour shine the more." When we come to the comedy itself, we find but little bright humour in the opening passages. The author is obviously

timid, anxious, and constrained. There is nothing of the brisk, confident vivacity with which *She Stoops to Conquer* opens. The novice does not yet understand the art of making his characters explain themselves: and accordingly the benevolent uncle and honest Jarvis indulge in a conversation which, laboriously descriptive of the character of young Honeywood, is spoken "at" the audience. With the entrance of young Honeywood himself, Goldsmith endeavours to become a little more sprightly; but there is still anxiety hanging over him, and the epigrams are little more than merely formal antitheses.

"*Jarvis.* This bill from your tailor; this from your mercer; and this from the little broker in Crooked Lane. He says he has been at a great deal of trouble to get back the money you borrowed.

"*Hon.* That I don't know; but I'm sure we were at a great deal of trouble in getting him to lend it.

"*Jar.* He has lost all patience.

"*Hon.* Then he has lost a very good thing.

"*Jar.* There's that ten guineas you were sending to the poor gentleman and his children in the Fleet. I believe that would stop his mouth, for a while at least.

"*Hon.* Ay, Jarvis, but what will fill their mouths in the meantime?"

This young Honeywood, the hero of the play, is, and remains throughout, a somewhat ghostly personage. He has attributes, but no flesh or blood. There is much more substance in the next character introduced—the inimitable Croaker, who revels in evil forebodings and drinks deep of the luxury of woe. These are the two chief characters; but then a play must have a plot. And perhaps it would not be fair, so far as the plot is concerned, to judge of *The Good-natured Man* merely as a literary production. Intricacies that seem tedious and puzzling on paper appear to be clear enough on the stage: it is much more easy to remember the history and circumstances of a person whom we see before us, than to attach these to a mere name—especially as the name is sure to be clipped down from *Honeywood* to *Hon.*, and from *Leontine* to *Leon.* However, it is in the midst of all the cross-purposes of the lovers that we once more come upon our old friend Beau Tibbs—though Mr. Tibbs is now in much better circumstances, and has been renamed by his creator Jack Lofty. Garrick had objected to the introduction of Jack, on the ground that he was only a distraction. But Goldsmith, whether in writing a novel or a play, was more anxious to represent human nature than to prune a plot, and paid but little respect to the unities, if only he could arouse our interest. And who is not delighted with this Jack Lofty and his "duchessy" talk—his airs of patronage, his mysterious hints, his gay familiarity with the great, his audacious lying?

"*Lofty.* Waller? Waller? Is he of the house?

"*Mrs. Croaker.* The modern poet of that name, sir.

"*Lof.* Oh, a modern! We men of business despise the moderns; and

as for the ancients, we have no time to read them. Poetry is a pretty thing enough for our wives and daughters; but not for us. Why now, here I stand that know nothing of books. I say, madam, I know nothing of books; and yet, I believe, upon a land-carriage fishery, a stamp act, or a jaghire, I can talk my two hours without feeling the want of them.

"*Mrs. Cro.* The world is no stranger to Mr. Lofty's eminence in every capacity.

"*Lof.* I vow to gad, madam, you make me blush. I'm nothing, nothing, nothing in the world; a mere obscure gentleman. To be sure, indeed, one or two of the present ministers are pleased to represent me as a formidable man. I know they are pleased to bespatter me at all their little dirty levees. Yet, upon my soul, I wonder what they see in me to treat me so! Measures, not men, have always been my mark; and I vow, by all that's honourable, my resentment has never done the men, as mere men, any manner of harm—that is, as mere men.

"*Mrs. Cro.* What importance, and yet what modesty!

"*Lof.* Oh, if you talk of modesty, madam, there, I own, I'm accessible to praise: modesty is my foible: it was so the Duke of Brentford used to say of me. 'I love Jack Lofty,' he used to say: 'no man has a finer knowledge of things; quite a man of information; and when he speaks upon his legs, by the Lord he's prodigious, he scouts them; and yet all men have their faults; too much modesty is his,' says his grace.

"*Mrs. Cro.* And yet, I dare say, you don't want assurance when you come to solicit for your friends.

"*Lof.* Oh, there indeed I'm in bronze. Apropos! I have just been mentioning Miss Richland's case to a certain personage; we must name no names. When I ask, I am not to be put off, madam. No, no, I take my friend by the button. A fine girl, sir; great justice in her case. A friend of mine—borough interest—business must be done, Mr. Secretary. —I say, Mr. Secretary, her business must be done, sir That's my way, madam.

"*Mrs. Cro.* Bless me! you said all this to the Secretary of State, did you?

"*Lof.* I did not say the Secretary, did I? Well, curse it, since you have found me out, I will not deny it. It was to the Secretary"

Strangely enough, what may now seem to some of us the very best scene in the *Good-natured Man*—the scene, that is, in which young Honeywood, suddenly finding Miss Richland without, is compelled to dress up the two bailiffs in possession of his house and introduce them to her as gentlemen friends—was very nearly damning the play on the first night of its production. The pit was of opinion that it was "low;" and subsequently the critics took up the cry, and professed themselves to be so deeply shocked by the vulgar humours of the bailiffs that Goldsmith had to cut them out. But on the opening night the anxious author, who had been rendered nearly distracted by the cries and hisses produced by this scene, was somewhat reassured when the audience began to laugh again over the tribulations of Mr. Croaker. To the actor who played the part he expressed his warm gratitude when the piece was over; assuring him that he had exceeded his own conception of the character, and that "the fine comic richness of his colouring made it almost appear as new to him as to any other person in the house."

The new play had been on the whole favourably received; and, when Goldsmith went along afterwards to the Club, his companions were doubtless not at all surprised to find him in good spirits. He was even merrier than usual, and consented to sing his favourite ballad about the old Woman tossed in a Blanket. But those hisses and cries were still rankling in his memory; and he himself subsequently confessed that he was "suffering horrid tortures." Nay, when the other members of the Club had gone, leaving him and Johnson together, he "burst out a-crying, and even swore by —— that he would never write again." When Goldsmith told this story in after-days, Johnson was naturally astonished; perhaps—himself not suffering much from an excessive sensitiveness—he may have attributed that little burst of hysterical emotion to the excitement of the evening increased by a glass or two of punch, and determined therefore never to mention it. "All which, Doctor," he said, "I thought had been a secret between you and me; and I am sure I would not have said anything about it for the world." Indeed there was little to cry over, either in the first reception of the piece or in its subsequent fate. With the offending bailiffs cut out, the comedy would seem to have been very fairly successful. The proceeds of three of the evenings were Goldsmith's payment; and in this manner he received £400. Then Griffin published the play; and from this source Goldsmith received an additional £100; so that altogether he was very well paid for his work. Moreover he had appealed against the judgment of the pit and the dramatic critics, by printing in the published edition the bailiff scene which had been removed from the stage; and the *Monthly Review* was so extremely kind as to say that "the bailiff and his blackguard follower appeared intolerable on the stage, yet we are not disgusted with them in the perusal." Perhaps we have grown less scrupulous since then; but at all events it would be difficult for anybody nowadays to find any thing but good-natured fun in that famous scene. There is an occasional "damn," it is true; but then English officers have always been permitted that little playfulness, and these two gentlemen were supposed to "serve in the Fleet;" while if they had been particularly refined in their speech and manner, how could the author have aroused Miss Richland's suspicions? It is possible that the two actors who played the bailiff and his follower may have introduced some vulgar "gag" into their parts; but there is no warranty for any thing of the kind in the play as we now read it.

CHAPTER XIII.

GOLDSMITH IN SOCIETY.

THE appearance of the *Good-natured Man* ushered in a halcyon period in Goldsmith's life. The *Traveller* and the *Vicar* had gained for him only reputation: this new comedy put £500 in his pocket. Of course that was too big a sum for Goldsmith to have about him long. Four-fifths of it he immediately expended on the purchase and decoration of a set of chambers in Brick Court, Middle Temple; with the remainder he appears to have begun a series of entertainments in this new abode, which were perhaps more remarkable for their mirth than their decorum. There was no sort of frolic in which Goldsmith would not indulge for the amusement of his guests; he would sing them songs; he would throw his wig to the ceiling; he would dance a minuet. And then they had cards, forfeits, blind-man's-buff, until Mr. Blackstone, then engaged on his *Commentaries* in the rooms below, was driven nearly mad by the uproar. These parties would seem to have been of a most nondescript character—chance gatherings of any obscure authors or actors whom he happened to meet; but from time to time there were more formal entertainments, at which Johnson, Percy, and similar distinguished persons were present. Moreover, Dr. Goldsmith himself was much asked out to dinner too; and so, not content with the "Tyrian bloom, satin grain and garter, blue-silk breeches," which Mr. Filby had provided for the evening of the production of the comedy, he now had another suit "lined with silk, and gold buttons," that he might appear in proper guise. Then he had his airs of consequence too. This was his answer to an invitation from Kelly, who was his rival of the hour: "I would with pleasure accept your kind invitation, but to tell you the truth, my dear boy, my *Traveller* has found me a home in so many places, that I am engaged, I believe, three days. Let me see. To-day I dine with Edmund Burke, to-morrow with Dr. Nugent, and the next day with Topham Beauclerc; but I'll tell you what I'll do for you, I'll dine with you on Saturday." Kelly told this story as against Goldsmith; but surely there is not so much ostentation in the reply. Directly after *Tristram Shandy* was published, Sterne found himself fourteen deep in dinner engagements: why should not the author of the *Traveller* and the *Vicar* and the *Good-natured*

Man have his engagements also? And perhaps it was but right that Mr. Kelly, who was after all only a critic and scribbler, though he had written a play which was for the moment enjoying an undeserved popularity, should be given to understand that Dr. Goldsmith was not to be asked to a hole-and-corner shop at a moment's notice. To-day he dines with Mr. Burke; to-morrow with Dr. Nugent; the day after with Mr. Beauclerc. If you wish to have the honour of his company, you may choose a day after that; and then, with his new wig, with his coat of Tyrian bloom and blue-silk breeches, with a smart sword at his side, his gold-headed cane in his hand, and his hat under his elbow, he will present himself in due course. Dr. Goldsmith is announced, and makes his grave bow: this is the man of genius about whom all the town is talking; the friend of Burke, of Reynolds, of Johnson, of Hogarth; this is not the ragged Irishman who was some time ago earning a crust by running errands for an apothecary.

Goldsmith's grand airs, however, were assumed but seldom; and they never imposed on anybody. His acquaintances treated him with a familiarity which testified rather to his good-nature than to their good taste. Now and again, indeed, he was prompted to resent this familiarity; but the effort was not successful. In the "high jinks" to which he good-humouredly resorted for the entertainment of his guests he permitted a freedom which it was afterwards not very easy to discard; and as he was always ready to make a butt of himself for the amusement of his friends and acquaintances, it came to be recognized that anybody was allowed to play off a joke on "Goldy." The jokes, such of them as have been put on record, are of the poorest sort. The horse-collar is never far off. One gladly turns from these dismal humours of the tavern and the club to the picture of Goldsmith's enjoying what he called a "Shoemaker's Holiday" in the company of one or two chosen intimates. Goldsmith, baited and bothered by the wits of a public-house, became a different being when he had assumed the guidance of a small party of chosen friends bent on having a day's frugal pleasure. We are indebted to one Cooke, a neighbour of Goldsmith's in the Temple, not only for a most interesting description of one of those shoemaker's holidays, but also for the knowledge that Goldsmith had even now begun writing the *Deserted Village*, which was not published till 1770, two years later. Goldsmith, though he could turn out plenty of manufactured stuff for the booksellers, worked slowly at the special story or poem with which he meant to "strike for honest fame." This Mr. Cooke, calling on him one morning, discovered that Goldsmith had that day written these ten lines of the *Deserted Village*;

> "Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
> Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
> How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
> Where humble happiness endeared each scene!
> How often have I paused on every charm,

The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church, that topt the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made!"

"Come," said he, "let me tell you this is no bad morning's work; and now, my dear boy, if you are not better engaged, I should be glad to enjoy a shoemaker's holiday with you." "A shoemaker's holiday," continues the writer of these reminiscences, "was a day of great festivity to poor Goldsmith, and was spent in the following innocent manner: Three or four of his intimate friends rendezvoused at his chambers to breakfast about ten o'clock in the morning; at eleven they proceeded by the City Road and through the fields to Highbury Barn to dinner; about six o'clock in the evening they adjourned to White Conduit House to drink tea; and concluded by supping at the Grecian or Temple Exchange coffee-house or at the Globe in Fleet Street. There was a very good ordinary of two dishes and pastry kept at Highbury Barn about this time at tenpence per head, including a penny to the waiter; and the company generally consisted of literary characters, a few Templars, and some citizens who had left off trade. The whole expenses of the day's fête never exceeded a crown, and oftener were from three-and-sixpence to four shillings; for which the party obtained good air and exercise, good living, the example of simple manners, and good conversation."

It would have been well indeed for Goldsmith had he been possessed of sufficient strength of character to remain satisfied with these simple pleasures, and to have lived the quiet and modest life of a man of letters on such income as he could derive from the best work he could produce. But it is this same Mr. Cooke who gives decisive testimony as to Goldsmith's increasing desire to "shine" by imitating the expenditure of the great; the natural consequence of which was that he only plunged himself into a morass of debt, advances, contracts for hack-work, and misery. "His debts rendered him at times so melancholy and dejected, that I am sure he felt himself a very unhappy man." Perhaps it was with some sudden resolve to flee from temptation, and grapple with the difficulties that beset him, that he, in conjunction with another Temple neighbour, Mr. Bott, rented a cottage some eight miles down the Edgware Road; and here he set to work on the *History of Rome*, which he was writing for Davies. Apart from this hack-work, now rendered necessary by his debt, it is probable that one strong inducement leading him to this occasional seclusion was the progress he might be able to make with the *Deserted Village*. Amid all his town gayeties and country excursions, amid his dinners and suppers and dances, his borrowings, and contracts, and the hurried literary produce of the moment, he never forgot what was due to his reputation as an English poet. The journalistic bullies of the day might vent their spleen and envy on him;

his best friends might smile at his conversational failures; the wits of the tavern might put up the horse-collar as before; but at least he had the consolation of his art. No one better knew than himself the value of those finished and musical lines he was gradually adding to the beautiful poem, the grace, and sweetness, and tender, pathetic charm of which make it one of the literary treasures of the English people.

The sorrows of debt were not Goldsmith's only trouble at this time. For some reason or other he seems to have become the especial object of spiteful attack on the part of the literary cutthroats of the day. And Goldsmith, though he might listen with respect to the wise advice of Johnson on such matters, was never able to cultivate Johnson's habit of absolute indifference to any thing that might be said or sung of him. "The Kenricks, Campbells, MacNicols, and Hendersons," says Lord Macaulay—speaking of Johnson, "did their best to annoy him, in the hope that he would give them importance by answering them. But the reader will in vain search his works for any allusion to Kenrick or Campbell, to MacNicol or Henderson. One Scotchman, bent on vindicating the fame of Scotch learning, defied him to the combat in a detestable Latin hexameter—

'Maxime, si tu vis, cupio contendere tecum.'

But Johnson took no notice of the challenge. He had learned, both from his own observation and from literary history, in which he was deeply read, that the place of books in the public estimation is fixed, not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them; and that an author whose works are likely to live is very unwise if he stoops to wrangle with detractors whose works are certain to die. He always maintained that fame was a shuttlecock which could be kept up only by being beaten back, as well as beaten forward, and which would soon fall if there were only one battledore. No saying was oftener in his mouth than that fine apophthegm of Bentley, that no man was ever written down but by himself."

It was not given to Goldsmith to feel "like the Monument" on any occasion whatsoever. He was anxious to have the esteem of his friends; he was sensitive to a degree; denunciation or malice, begotten of envy that Johnson would have passed unheeded, wounded him to the quick. "The insults to which he had to submit," Thackeray wrote with a quick and warm sympathy, "are shocking to read of—slander, contumely, vulgar satire, brutal malignity perverting his commonest motives and actions: he had his share of these, and one's anger is roused at reading of them, as it is at seeing a woman insulted or a child assaulted, at the notion that a creature so very gentle, and weak, and full of love should have had to suffer so." Goldsmith's revenge, his defence of himself, his appeal to the public, were the *Traveller*, the *Vicar of Wakefield*, the *Deserted Village;* but these came at long inter-

vals; and in the meantime he had to bear with the anonymous malignity that pursued him as best he might. No doubt, when Burke was entertaining him at dinner, and when Johnson was openly deferring to him in conversation at the Club, and when Reynolds was painting his portrait, he could afford to forget Mr. Kenrick and the rest of the libelling clan.

The occasions on which Johnson deferred to Goldsmith in conversation were no doubt few; but at all events the bludgeon of the great Cham would appear to have come down less frequently on "honest Goldy" than on the other members of that famous coterie. It could come down heavily enough. "Sir," said an incautious person, "drinking drives away care, and makes us forget whatever is disagreeable. Would not you allow a man to drink for that reason?" "Yes, sir," was the reply, "if he sat next *you*." Johnson, however, was considerate towards Goldsmith, partly because of his affection for him, and partly because he saw under what disadvantages Goldsmith entered the lists. For one thing, the conversation of those evenings would seem to have drifted continually into the mere definition of phrases. Now Johnson had spent years of his life, during the compilation of his Dictionary, in doing nothing else but defining; and, whenever the dispute took a phraseological turn, he had it all his own way. Goldsmith, on the other hand, was apt to become confused in his eager self-consciousness. "Goldsmith," said Johnson to Boswell, "should not be forever attempting to shine in conversation; he has not temper for it, he is so much mortified when he fails. . . When he contends, if he gets the better, it is a very little addition to a man of his literary reputation: if he does not get the better, he is miserably vexed." Boswell, nevertheless, admits that Goldsmith was "often very fortunate in his witty contests, even when he entered the lists with Johnson himself," and goes on to tell how Goldsmith, relating the fable of the little fishes who petitioned Jupiter, and perceiving that Johnson was laughing at him, immediately said, "Why, Dr. Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think; for if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like WHALES." Who but Goldsmith would have dared to play jokes on the sage? At supper they have rumps and kidneys. The sage expresses his approval of "the pretty little things;" but profoundly observes that one must eat a good many of them before being satisfied. "Ay, but how many of them," asks Goldsmith, "would reach to the moon?" The sage professes his ignorance; and, indeed, remarks that that would exceed even Goldsmith's calculations; when the pratical joker observes, "Why, *one*, sir, if it were long enough." Johnson was completely beaten on this occasion. "Well, sir, I have deserved it. I should not have provoked so foolish an answer by so foolish a question."

It was Johnson himself, moreover, who told the story of Goldsmith and himself being in Poets' Corner; of his saying to Goldsmith,

"Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur istis,"

and of Goldsmith subsequently repeating the quotation when, having walked towards Fleet Street, they were confronted by the heads on Temple Bar. Even when Goldsmith was opinionated and wrong, Johnson's contradiction was in a manner gentle. "If you put a tub full of blood into a stable, the horses are like to go mad," observed Goldsmith. "I doubt that," was Johnson's reply. "Nay, sir, it is a fact well authenticated." Here Thrale interposed to suggest that Goldsmith should have the experiment tried in the stable; but Johnson merely said that, if Goldsmith began making these experiments, he would never get his book written at all. Occasionally, of course, Goldsmith was tossed and gored just like another. "But, sir," he had ventured to say, in opposition to Johnson, "when people live together who have something as to which they disagree, and which they want to shun, they will be in the situation mentioned in the story of Bluebeard, 'You may look into all the chambers but one.' But we should have the greatest inclination to look into that chamber, to talk of that subject." Here, according to Boswell, Johnson answered in a loud voice, "Sir, I am not saying that *you* could live in friendship with a man from whom you differ as to one point; I am only saying that *I* could do it." But then again he could easily obtain pardon from the gentle Goldsmith for any occasional rudeness. One evening they had a sharp passage of arms at dinner; and thereafter the company adjourned to the Club, where Goldsmith sat silent and depressed. "Johnson perceived this," says Boswell, "and said aside to some of us, 'I'll make Goldsmith forgive me;' and then called to him in a loud voice, 'Dr. Goldsmith, something passed to-day where you and I dined: I ask your pardon.' Goldsmith answered placidly, 'It must be much from you, sir, that I take ill.' And so at once the difference was over, and they were on as easy terms as ever, and Goldsmith rattled away as usual." For the rest, Johnson was the constant and doughty champion of Goldsmith as a man of letters. He would suffer no one to doubt the power and versatility of that genius which he had been amongst the first to recognize and encourage.

"Whether, indeed, we take him as a poet, as a comic writer, or as an historian," he announced to an assemblage of distinguished persons met together at dinner at Mr. Beauclerc's, "*he stands in the first class.*" And there was no one living who dared dispute the verdict—at least in Johnson's hearing.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DESERTED VILLAGE.

BUT it is time to return to the literary performances that gained for this uncouth Irishman so great an amount of consideration from the first men of his time. The engagement with Griffin about the *History of Animated Nature* was made at the beginning of 1769. The work was to occupy eight volumes; and Dr. Goldsmith was to receive eight hundred guineas for the complete copyright. Whether the undertaking was originally a suggestion of Griffin's, or of Goldsmith's own, does not appear. If it was the author's, it was probably only the first means that occurred to him of getting another advance; and that advance—£500 on account—he did actually get. But if it was the suggestion of the publisher, Griffin must have been a bold man. A writer whose acquaintance with animated nature was such as to allow him to make the "insidious tiger" a denizen of the backwoods of Canada,* was not a very safe authority. But perhaps Griffin had consulted Johnson before making this bargain; and we know that Johnson, though continually remarking on Goldsmith's extraordinary ignorance of facts, was of opinion that the *History of Animated Nature* would be "as entertaining as a Persian tale." However, Goldsmith—no doubt after he had spent the five hundred guineas—tackled the work in earnest. When Boswell subsequently went out to call on him at another rural retreat he had taken on the Edgware Road, Boswell and Mickle, the translator of the *Lusiad*, found Goldsmith from home; "but, having a curiosity to see his apartment, we went in and found curious scraps of descriptions of animals scrawled upon the wall with a black-lead pencil." Meanwhile, this *Animated Nature* being in hand, the *Roman History* was published, and was very well received by the critics and by the public. "Goldsmith's abridgment," Johnson declared, "is better than that of Lucius Florus or Eutropius; and I will venture to say that if you compare him with Vertot, in the same places of the *Roman History*, you will find that he excels Vertot. Sir, he has the art of compiling, and of saying every thing he has to say in a pleasing manner."

So thought the booksellers too; and the success of the *Roman*

* See *Citizen of the World*, Letter XVII.

History only involved him in fresh projects of compilation. By an offer of £500 Davies induced him to lay aside for the moment the *Animated Nature* and begin "An History of England, from the Birth of the British Empire to the death of George the Second, in four volumes octavo." He also about this time undertook to write a Life of Thomas Parnell. Here, indeed, was plenty of work, and work promising good pay; but the depressing thing is that Goldsmith should have been the man who had to do it. He may have done it better than any one else could have done—indeed, looking over the results of all that drudgery, we recognize now the happy turns of expression which were never long absent from Goldsmith's prose-writing—but the world could well afford to sacrifice all the task-work thus got through for another poem like the *Deserted Village* or the *Traveller*. Perhaps Goldsmith considered he was making a fair compromise when, for the sake of his reputation, he devoted a certain portion of his time to his poetical work, and then, to have money for fine clothes and high jinks, gave the rest to the booksellers. One critic, on the appearance of the *Roman History*, referred to the *Traveller*, and remarked that it was a pity that the "author of one of the best poems that has appeared since those of Mr. Pope, should not apply wholly to works of imagination." We may echo that regret now; but Goldsmith would at the time have no doubt replied that, if he had trusted to his poems, he would never have been able to pay £400 for chambers in the Temple. In fact he said as much to Lord Lisburn at one of the Academy dinners: "I cannot afford to court the draggle-tail muses, my Lord; they would let me starve; but by my other labours I can make shift to eat, and drink, and have good clothes." And there is little use in our regretting now that Goldsmith was not cast in a more heroic mould; we have to take him as he is; and be grateful for what he has left us.

It is a grateful relief to turn from these booksellers' contracts and forced labours to the sweet clear note of singing that one finds in the *Deserted Village*. This poem, after having been repeatedly announced and as often withdrawn for further revision, was at last published on the 26th of May, 1770, when Goldsmith was in his forty-second year. The leading idea of it he had already thrown out in certain lines in the *Traveller*:

> "Have we not seen, round Britain's peopled shore,
> Her useful sons exchanged for useless ore?
> Seen all her triumphs but destruction haste,
> Like flaring tapers brightening as they waste?
> Seen opulence, her grandeur to maintain,
> Lead stern depopulation in her train,
> And over fields where scattered hamlets ros
> In barren solitary pomp repose?
> Have we not seen at pleasure's lordly call
> The smiling long-frequented village fall?
> Beheld the duteous son, the sire decayed,
> The modest matron, and the blushing maid,

Forced from their homes, a melancholy train,
To traverse climes beyond the western main;
Where wild Oswego spreads her swamps around,
And Niagara stuns with thundering sound?"

—and elsewhere, in recorded conversations of his, we find that he had somehow got it into his head that the accumulation of wealth in a country was the parent of all evils, including depopulation. We need not stay here to discuss Goldsmith's position as a political economist; even although Johnson seems to sanction his theory in the four lines he contributed to the end of the poem. Nor is it worth while returning to that objection of Lord Macaulay's which has already been mentioned in these pages, further than to repeat that the poor Irish village in which Goldsmith was brought up, no doubt looked to him as charming as any Auburn, when he regarded it through the softening and beautifying mist of years. It is enough that the abandonment by a number of poor people of the homes in which they and theirs have lived their lives, is one of the most pathetic facts in our civilisation; and that out of the various circumstances surrounding this forced migration Goldsmith has made one of the most graceful and touching poems in the English language. It is clear bird-singing; but there is a pathetic note in it. That imaginary ramble through the Lissoy that is far away has recalled more than his boyish sports; it has made him look back over his own life—the life of an exile.

"I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose:
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still;
Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill,
Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
And, as a hare whom hounds and horns pursue
Pants to the place from whence at first he flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return—and die at home at last."

Who can doubt that it was of Lissoy he was thinking? Sir Walter Scott, writing a generation ago, said that "the church which tops the neighbouring hill," the mill and the brook were still to be seen in the Irish village; and that even

"The hawthorn bush with seats beneath the shade.
For talking age and whispering lovers made,"

had been identified by the indefatigable tourist, and was of course being cut to pieces to make souvenirs. But indeed it is of little consequence whether we say that Auburn is an English village, or insist that it is only Lissoy idealised, as long as the thing is true in itself. And we know that this is true: it is not that one sees the

place as a picture, but that one seems to be breathing its very atmosphere, and listening to the various cries that thrill the "hollow silence."

> "Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close
> Up yonder hill the village murmur rose.
> There, as I past with careless steps and slow,
> The mingling notes came softened from below;
> The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung,
> The sober herd that lowed to meet their young,
> The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
> The playful children just let loose from school,
> The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whispering wind,
> And the loud laugh that spake the vacant mind."

Nor is it any romantic and impossible peasantry that is gradually brought before us. There are no Norvals in Lissoy. There is the old woman—Catherine Geraghty, they say, was her name—who gathered cresses in the ditches near her cabin. There is the village preacher whom Mrs. Hodson, Goldsmith's sister, took to be a portrait of their father; but whom others have identified as Henry Goldsmith, and even as the uncle Contarine: they may all have contributed. And then comes Paddy Byrne. Amid all the pensive tenderness of the poem this description of the schoolmaster, with its strokes of demure humour, is introduced with delightful effect:

> "Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
> With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,
> There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
> The village master taught his little school.
> A man severe he was, and stern to view;
> I knew him well, and every truant knew:
> Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
> The day's disasters in his morning face;
> Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
> At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
> Full well the busy whisper circling round
> Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned
> Yet he was kind, or, if severe in aught,
> The love he bore to learning was in fault:
> The village all declared how much he knew:
> 'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too:
> Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
> And e'en the story ran that he could gauge:
> In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill;
> For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still;
> While words of learnèd length and thundering sound
> Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;
> And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew
> That one small head could carry all he knew."

All this is so simple and natural that we cannot fail to believe in

the reality of Auburn, or Lissoy, or whatever the village may be supposed to be. We visit the clergyman's cheerful fireside; and look in on the noisy school; and sit in the evening in the ale-house to listen to the profound politics talked there. But the crisis comes. Auburn *delenda est*. Here, no doubt, occurs the least probable part of the poem. Poverty of soil is a common cause of emigration: land that produces oats (when it can produce oats at all) three-fourths mixed with weeds, and hay chiefly consisting of rushes, naturally discharges its surplus population as families increase; and though the wrench of parting is painful enough, the usual result is a change from starvation to competence. It more rarely happens that a district of peace and plenty, such as Auburn was supposed to see around it, is depopulated to add to a great man's estate.

> "The man of wealth and pride
> Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
> Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
> Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds:
> * * * * * * *
> His seat, where solitary sports are seen,
> Indignant spurns the cottage from the green;"

and so forth. This seldom happens; but it does happen; and it has happened, in our own day, in England. It is within the last twenty-years that an English landlord, having faith in his riches, bade a village be removed and cast elsewhere, so that it should no longer be visible from his windows: and it was forthwith removed. But any solitary instance like this is not sufficient to support the theory that wealth and luxury are inimical to the existence of a hardy peasantry: and so we must admit, after all, that it is poetical exigency rather than political economy that has decreed the destruction of the loveliest village of the plain. Where, asks the poet, are the driven poor to find refuge, when even the fenceless commons are seized upon and divided by the rich? In the great cities?—

> "To see profusion that we must not share;
> To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
> To pamper luxury and thin mankind."

It is in this description of a life in cities that there occurs an often-quoted passage, which has in it one of the most perfect lines in English poetry:

> "Ah! turn thine eyes
> Where the poor houseless shivering female lies.
> She once, perhaps, in village plenty blest,
> Has wept at tales of innocence distrest;
> Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
> Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn;

Now lost to all; her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head.
And, pinched with cold, and shrinking from the shower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
When idly first, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel and robes of country brown"

Goldsmith wrote in a pre-Wordsworthian age, when, even in the realms of poetry, a primrose was not much more than a primrose; but it is doubtful whether, either before, during, or since Wordsworth's time, the sentiment that the imagination can infuse into the common and familiar things around us ever received more happy expression than in the well-known line,

"*Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn.*"

No one has as yet succeeded in defining accurately and concisely what poetry is; but at all events this line is surcharged with a certain quality which is conspicuously absent in such a production as the *Essay on Man.* Another similar line is to be found further on in the description of the distant scenes to which the proscribed people are driven:

"Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe."

Indeed, the pathetic side of emigration has never been so powerfully presented to us as in this poem:

"When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,
Hung round the bowers, and fondly looked their last,
And took a long farewell, and wished in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main,
And shuddering still to face the distant deep,
Returned and wept, and still returned to weep.
* * * * * *
Even now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,
I see the rural virtues leave the land.
Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail,
That idly waiting flaps with every gale,
Downward they move a melancholy band,
Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.
Contented toil, and hospitable care,
And kind connubial tenderness are there;
And piety with wishes placed above,
And steady loyalty, and faithful love."

And worst of all, in this imaginative departure, we find that Poetry herself is leaving our shores. She is now to try her voice

"On Torno's cliffs or Pambamarca's side;"

and the poet, in the closing lines of the poem, bids her a passionate and tender farewell:

"And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade;
Unfit in these degenerate times of shame
To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame;
Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so;
Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel,
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well!
Farewell, and oh! where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,
Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,
Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
Redress the rigours of the inclement clime:
Aid slighted truth with thy persuasive strain;
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain:
Teach him, that states of native strength possest,
Though very poor, may still be very blest;
That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
As ocean sweeps the laboured mole away;
While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky."

So ends this graceful, melodious, tender poem, the position of which in English literature, and in the estimation of all who love English literature, has not been disturbed by any fluctuations of literary fashion. We may give more attention at the moment to the new experiments of the poetic method; but we return only with renewed gratitude to the old familiar strain, not the least merit of which is that it has nothing about it of foreign tricks or graces. In English literature there is nothing more thoroughly English than these writings produced by an Irishman. And whether or not it was Paddy Byrne, and Catherine Geraghty, and the Lissoy ale-house that Goldsmith had in his mind when he was writing the poem, is not of much consequence: the manner and language and feeling are all essentially English; so that we never think of calling Goldsmith anything but an English poet.

The poem met with great and immediate success. Of course every thing that Dr. Goldsmith now wrote was read by the public; he had not to wait for the recommendation of the reviews; but, in this case, even the reviews had scarcely any thing but praise in the welcome of his new book. It was dedicated, in graceful and ingenious terms, to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who returned the compliment by painting a picture and placing on the engraving of it this inscription: "This attempt to express a character in the *Deserted Village* is dedicated to Dr. Goldsmith by his sincere friend and admirer, Sir Joshua Reynolds." What Goldsmith got from Griffin for the poem is not accurately known; and this is a misfortune, for the knowledge would have enabled us to judge whether at that time it was possible for a poet to court the draggle-tail muses with-

out risk of starvation. But if fame were his chief object in the composition of the poem, he was sufficiently rewarded ; and it is to be surmised that by this time the people in Ireland—no longer implored to get subscribers—had heard of the proud position won by the vagrant youth who had " taken the world for his pillow " some eighteen years before.

That his own thoughts had sometimes wandered back to the scenes and friends of his youth during this labour of love, we know from his letters. In January of this year, while as yet the *Deserted Village* was not quite through the press, he wrote to his brother Maurice ; and expressed himself as most anxious to hear all about the relatives from whom he had been so long parted. He has something to say about himself too ; wishes it to be known that the King has lately been pleased to make him Professor of Ancient History " in a Royal Academy of Painting which he has just established ; " but gives no very flourishing account of his circumstances. " Honours to one in my situation are something like ruffles to a man that wants a shirt." However, there is some small legacy of fourteen or fifteen pounds left him by his uncle Contarine, which he understands to be in the keeping of his cousin Lawder ; and to this wealth he is desirous of foregoing all claim : his relations must settle how it may be best expended. But there is not a reference to his literary achievements, or the position won by them ; not the slightest yielding to even a pardonable vanity ; it is a modest, affectionate letter. The only hint that Maurice Goldsmith receives of the esteem in which his brother is held in London, is contained in a brief mention of Johnson, Burke, and others as his friends. " I have sent my cousin Jenny a miniature picture of myself, as I believe it is the most acceptable present I can offer. I have ordered it to be left for her at George Faulkenor's, folded in a letter. The face, you well know, is ugly enough ; but it is finely painted. I will shortly also send my friends over the Shannon some mezzotinto prints of myself, and some more of my friends here, such as Burke, Johnson, Reynolds, and Colman. I believe I have written an hundred letters to different friends in your country, and never received an answer from any of them. I do not know how to account for this, or why they are unwilling to keep up for me those regards which I must ever retain for them." The letter winds up with an appeal for news, news, news.

CHAPTER XV.

OCCASIONAL WRITINGS.

SOME two months after the publication of the *Deserted Village*, when its success had been well assured, Goldsmith proposed to himself the relaxation of a little Continental tour; and he was accompanied by three ladies, Mrs. Horneck and her two pretty daughters, who doubtless took more charge of him than he did of them. This Mrs. Horneck, the widow of a certain Captain Horneck, was connected with Reynolds, while Burke was the guardian of the two girls; so that it was natural that they should make the acquaintance of Dr. Goldsmith. A foolish attempt has been made to weave out of the relations supposed to exist between the younger of the girls and Goldsmith an imaginary romance; but there is not the slightest actual foundation for anything of the kind. Indeed the best guide we can have to the friendly and familiar terms on which he stood with regard to the Hornecks and their circle, is the following careless and jocular reply to a chance invitation sent him by the two sisters:

"Your mandate I got,
You may all go to pot;
Had your senses been right,
You'd have sent before night;
As I hope to be saved,
I put off being shaved;
For I could not make bold,
While the matter was cold,
To meddle in suds,
Or to put on my duds;
So tell Horneck and Nesbitt
And Baker and his bit,
And Kauffman beside,
And the Jessamy bride;
With the rest of the crew
The Reynoldses two,
Little Comedy's face
And the Captain in lace.

* * * *

Yet how can I when vext
Thus stray from my text?

Tell each other to rue
Your Devonshire crew,
For sending so late
To one of my state.
But 'tis Reynolds's way
From wisdom to stray,
And Angelica's whim
To be frolic like him.
But, alas! your good worships, how could they be wiser,
When both have been spoiled in to-day's *Advertiser?*"

"The Jessamy Bride" was the pet nickname he had bestowed on the younger Miss Horneck—the heroine of the speculative romance just mentioned; "Little Comedy" was her sister; "the Captain in lace" their brother, who was in the Guards. No doubt Mrs. Horneck and her daughters were very pleased to have with them on this Continental trip so distinguished a person as Dr. Goldsmith; and he must have been very ungrateful if he was not glad to be provided with such charming companions. The story of the sudden envy he displayed of the admiration excited by the two handsome young Englishwomen as they stood at a hotel-window in Lille, is so incredibly foolish that it needs scarcely be repeated here; unless to repeat the warning that, if ever anybody was so dense as not to see the humour of that piece of acting, one had better look with grave suspicion on every one of the stories told about Goldsmith's vanities and absurdities.

Even with such pleasant companions, the trip to Paris was not every thing he had hoped. "I find," he wrote to Reynolds from Paris, "that travelling at twenty and at forty are very different things. I set out with all my confirmed habits about me, and can find nothing on the Continent so good as when I formerly left it. One of our chief amusements here is scolding at every thing we meet with, and praising everything and every person we left at home. You may judge therefore whether your name is not frequently bandied at table among us. To tell you the truth, I never thought I could regret your absence so much, as our various mortifications on the road have often taught me to do. I could tell you of disasters and adventures without number, of our lying in barns, and my being half poisoned with a dish of green peas, of our quarrelling with postilions and being cheated by our landladies, but I reserve all this for a happy hour which I expect to share with you upon my return." The fact is that although Goldsmith had seen a good deal of foreign travel, the manner of his making the grand tour in his youth was not such as to fit him for acting as courier to a party of ladies. However, if they increased his troubles, they also shared them; and in this same letter he bears explicit testimony to the value of their companionship. "I will soon be among you, better pleased with my situation at home than I ever was before. And yet I must say, that if any thing could make France pleasant, the very good women with whom I am at

present would certainly do it. I could say more about that, but I intend showing them this letter before I send it away." Mrs. Horneck, Little Comedy, the Jessamy Bride, and the Professor of Ancient History at the Royal Academy, all returned to London; the last to resume his round of convivialities at taverns, excursions into regions of more fashionable amusement along with Reynolds, and task-work aimed at the pockets of the booksellers.

It was a happy-go-lucky sort of life. We find him now showing off his fine clothes and his sword and wig at Ranelagh Gardens, and again shut up in his chambers compiling memoirs and histories in hot haste; now the guest of Lord Clare, and figuring at Bath, and again delighting some small domestic circle by his quips and cranks; playing jokes for the amusement of children, and writing comic letters in verse to their elders; everywhere and at all times merry, thoughtless, good-natured. And, of course, we find also his humorous pleasantries being mistaken for blundering stupidity. In perfect good faith Boswell describes how a number of people burst out laughing when Goldsmith publicly complained that he had met Lord Camden at Lord Clare's house in the country, "and he took no more notice of me than if I had been an ordinary man." Goldsmith's claiming to be a very extraordinary person was precisely a stroke of that humorous self-depreciation in which he was continually indulging; and the Jessamy Bride has left it on record that "on many occasions, from the peculiar manner of his humour, and assumed frown of countenance, what was often uttered in jest was mistaken by those who did not know him for earnest." This would appear to have been one of those occasions. The company burst out laughing at Goldsmith's having made a fool of himself; and Johnson was compelled to come to his rescue. "Nay, gentlemen, Dr. Goldsmith is in the right. A nobleman ought to have made up to such a man as Goldsmith, and I think it is much against Lord Camden that he neglected him."

Mention of Lord Clare naturally recalls the *Haunch of Venison*. Goldsmith was particularly happy in writing bright and airy verses; the grace and lightness of his touch has rarely been approached. It must be confessed, however, that in this direction he was somewhat of an Autolycus; unconsidered trifles he freely appropriated; but he committed these thefts with scarcely any concealment, and with the most charming air in the world. In fact some of the snatches of verse which he contributed to the *Bee* scarcely profess to be anything else than translations, though the originals are not given. But who is likely to complain when we get as the result such a delightful piece of nonsense as the famous Elegy on that Glory of her Sex, Mrs. Mary Blaize, which has been the parent of a vast progeny since Goldsmith's time?

"Good people all, with one accord
Lament for Madam Blaize,
Who never wanted a good word
From those who spoke her praise.

"The needy seldom passed her door,
And always found her kind;
She freely lent to all the poor—
Who left a pledge behind.

"She strove the neighbourhood to please,
With manners wondrous winning;
And never followed wicked ways—
Unless when she was sinning.

"At church, in silks and satins new,
With hoop of monstrous size,
She never slumbered in her pew—
But when she shut her eyes.

"Her love was sought, I do aver,
By twenty beaux and more;
The king himself has followed her
When she has walked before.

"But now her wealth and finery fled,
Her hangers-on cut short all;
The Doctors found, when she was dead—
Her last disorder mortal.

"Let us lament, in sorrow sore,
For Kent Street well may say,
That had she lived a twelvemonth more—
She had not died to-day."

The *Haunch of Venison*, on the other hand, is a poetical letter of thanks to Lord Clare—an easy, jocular epistle, in which the writer has a cut or two at certain of his literary brethren. Then, as he is looking at the venison, and determining not to send it to any such people as Hiffernan or Higgins, who should step in but our old friend Beau Tibbs, or some one remarkably like him in manner and speech?—

"While thus I debated, in reverie centred,
An acquaintance, a friend as he called himself, entered
An under-bred, fine-spoken fellow was he,
And he smiled as he looked at the venison and me.
'What have we got here?—Why this is good eating!
Your own, I suppose—or is it in waiting?'
'Why, whose should it be?' cried I with a flounce;
'I get these things often'—but that was a bounce:
'Some lords, my acquaintance, that settle the nation,
Are pleased to be kind—but I hate ostentation.'
'If that be the case then,' cried he, very gay,
'I'm glad to have taken this house in my way.
To-morrow you take a poor dinner with me;
No words—I insist on't—precisely at three:
We'll have Johnson, and Burke; all the wits will be there
My acquaintance is slight, or I'd ask my Lord Clare.

And now that I think on't, as I am a sinner!
We wanted this venison to make out the dinner.
What say you—a pasty? It shall, and it must,
And my wife, little Kitty, is famous for crust.
Here, porter! this venison with me to Mile End;
Nor stirring—I beg—my dear friend—my dear friend!
Thus, snatching his hat, he brushed off like the wind,
And the porter and eatables followed behind."

We need not follow the vanished venison—which did not make its appearance at the banquet any more than did Johnson or Burke—further than to say that if Lord Clare did not make it good to the poet he did not deserve to have his name associated with such a clever and careless *jeu d'esprit*.

CHAPTER XVI.

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER.

BUT the writing of smart verses could not keep Dr. Goldsmith alive, more especially as dinner-parties, Ranelagh masquerades, and similar diversions pressed heavily on his finances. When his *History of England* appeared, the literary cutthroats of the day accused him of having been bribed by the Government to betray the liberties of the people:* a foolish charge. What Goldsmith got for the *English History* was the sum originally stipulated for, and now no doubt all spent; with a further sum of fifty guineas for an abridgment of the work. Then, by this time, he had persuaded Griffin to advance him the whole of the eight hundred guineas for the *Animated Nature*, though he had only done about a third part of the book. At the instigation of Newbery he had begun a story after the manner of the *Vicar of Wakefield;* but it appears that such chapters as he had written were not deemed to be promising; and the undertaking was abandoned. The fact is, Goldsmith was now thinking of another method of replenishing his purse. The *Vicar of Wakefield* had brought him little but reputation; the *Good-natured Man* had brought him £500. It was to the stage that he now looked for assistance out of the financial slough in which he was plunged. He was engaged in writing a comedy; and that comedy was *She Stoops to Conquer.*

In the Dedication to Johnson which was prefixed to this play on its appearance in type, Goldsmith hints that the attempt to write a comedy not of the sentimental order then in fashion, was a hazardous thing; and also that Colman, who saw the piece in its various stages, was of this opinion too. Colman threw cold water on the undertaking from the very beginning. It was only extreme pressure on the part of Goldsmith's friends that induced—or rather compelled—him to accept the comedy; and that, after he had kept the unfortunate author in the turtures of suspense for month after month. But although Goldsmith knew the danger, he was resolved to face it. He hated the sentimentalists and all their works; and determined to keep his new comedy faithful to nature, whether

* "God knows I had no thought for or against liberty in my head; my whole aim being to make up a book of a decent size that, as Squire Richard says, 'would do no harm to nobody.'"—Goldsmith to Langton, September, 1771.

people called it low or not. His object was to raise a genuine, hearty laugh; not to write a piece for school declamation; and he had enough confidence in himself to do the work in his own way. Moreover he took the earliest possible opportunity, in writing this piece, of poking fun at the sensitive creatures who had been shocked by the "vulgarity" of *The Good-natured Man.* "Bravo! Bravo!" cry the jolly companions of Tony Lumpkin, when that promising buckeen has finished his song at the Three Pigeons; then follows criticism:

"*First Fellow.* The squire has got spunk in him.

"*Second Fel.* I loves to hear him sing, bekeays he never gives us nothing that's low.

"*Third Fel.* O damn any thing that's low, I cannot bear it.

"*Fourth Fel.* The genteel thing is the genteel thing any time: if so be that a gentleman bees in a concatenation accordingly.

"*Third Fel.* I likes the maxum of it, Master Muggins. What, though I am obligated to dance a bear, a man may be a gentleman for all that. May this be my poison, if my bear ever dances but to the very genteelest of tunes; 'Water Parted,' or the 'The Minuet in Ariadne.'"

Indeed, Goldsmith, however he might figure in society, was always capable of holding his own when he had his pen in his hand. And even at the outset of this comedy one sees how much he has gained in literary confidence since the writing of the *Good-natured Man.* Here there is no anxious stiffness at all; but a brisk, free conversation, full of point that is not too formal, and yet conveying all the information that has usually to be crammed into a first scene. In taking as the groundwork of his plot that old adventure that had befallen himself—his mistaking a squire's house for an inn—he was hampering himself with something that was not the less improbable because it had actually happened; but we begin to forget all the improbabilities through the naturalness of the people to whom we are introduced, and the brisk movement and life of the piece.

Fashions in dramatic literature may come and go: but the wholesome good-natured fun of *She Stoops to Conquer* is as capable of producing a hearty laugh now as it was when it first saw the light in Covent Garden. Tony Lumpkin is one of the especial favourites of the theatregoing public; and no wonder. With all the young cub's jibes and jeers, his impudence and grimaces, one has a sneaking love for the scapegrace; we laugh with him, rather than at him; how can we fail to enjoy those malevolent tricks of his when he so obviously enjoys them himself? And Diggory—do we not owe an eternal debt of gratitude to honest Diggory for telling us about Ould Grouse in the gunroom, that immortal joke at which thousands and thousands of people have roared with laughter, though they never any one of them could tell what the story was about? The scene in which the old squire lectures his faithful attendants on their manners and duties, is one of the truest bits of comedy on the English stage:

"*Mr. Hardcastle.* But you're not to stand so, with your hands in your pockets. Take your hands from your pockets, Roger; and from your head, you blockhead you. See how Diggory carries his hands. They're a little too stiff, indeed, but that's no great matter.

"*Diggory.* Ay, mind how I hold them. I learned to hold my hands this way when I was upon drill for the militia. And so being upon drill——

"*Hard.* You must not be so talkative, Diggory. You must be all attention to the guests. You must hear us talk, and not think of talking; you must see us drink, and not think of drinking; you must see us eat, and not think of eating.

"*Dig.* By the laws, your worship, that's parfectly unpossible. Whenever Diggory sees yeating going forward, ecod, he's always wishing for a-mouthful himself.

"*Hard.* Blockhead! Is not a bellyful in the kitchen as good as a bellyful in the parlor? Stay your stomach with that reflection.

"*Dig.* Ecod, I thank your worship, I'll make a shift to stay my stomach with a slice of cold beef in the pantry.

"*Hard.* Diggory, you are too talkative.—Then, if I happen to say a good thing, or tell a good story at table, you must not all burst out a-laughing, as if you made part of the company.

"*Dig.* Then ecod your worship must not tell the story of Ould Grouse in the gunroom; I can't help laughing at that—he! he! he!—for the soul of me. We have laughed at that these twenty years—ha! ha! ha!

"*Hard.* Ha! ha! ha! The story is a good one. Well, honest Diggory, you may laugh at that—but still remember to be attentive. Suppose one of the company should call for a glass of wine, how will you behave? A glass of wine, sir, if you please (*to* DIGGORY).—Eh, why don't you move?

"*Dig.* Ecod, your worship, I never have courage till I see the eatables and drinkables brought upo' the table, and then I'm as bauld as a lion.

"*Hard.* What, will nobody move?

"*First Serv.* I'm not to leave this pleace.

"*Second Serv.* I'm sure it's no pleace of mine.

"*Third Serv.* Nor mine, for sartain.

"*Dig.* Wauns, and I'm sure it canna be mine."

No doubt all this is very "low" indeed; and perhaps Mr. Colman may be forgiven for suspecting that the refined wits of the day would be shocked by these rude humours of a parcel of servants. But all that can be said in this direction was said at the time by Horace Walpole, in a letter to a friend of his; and this criticism is so amusing in its pretence and imbecility that it is worth quoting at large. "Dr. Goldsmith has written a comedy," says this profound critic, "—no, it is the lowest of all farces; it is not the subject I condemn, though very vulgar, but the execution. The drift tends to no moral, no edification of any kind—the situations, however, are well imagined, and make one laugh in spite of the grossness of the dialogue, the forced witticisms, and total improbability of the whole plan and conduct. But what disgusts me most is, that though the characters are very low, and aim at low humour, not one of them says a sentence that is natural, or marks any character at all." Horace Walpole sighing for edification—

from a Covent Garden comedy! Surely, if the old gods have any laughter left, and if they take any notice of what is done in the literary world here below, there must have rumbled through the courts of Olympus a guffaw of sardonic laughter when that solemn criticism was put down on paper.

Meanwhile Colman's original fears had developed into a sort of stupid obstinacy. He was so convinced that the play would not succeed, that he would spend no money in putting it on the stage; while far and wide he announced its failure as a foregone conclusion. Under this gloom of vaticination the rehearsals were nevertheless proceeded with—the brunt of the quarrels among the players falling wholly on Goldsmith, for the manager seems to have withdrawn in despair; while all the Johnson confraternity were determined to do what they could for Goldsmith on the opening night. That was the 15th of March, 1773. His friends invited the author to dinner as a prelude to the play; Dr. Johnson was in the chair; there was plenty of gaiety. But this means of keeping up the anxious author's spirits was not very successful. Goldsmith's mouth, we are told by Reynolds, became so parched "from the agitation of his mind, that he was unable to swallow a single mouthful." Moreover, he could not face the ordeal of sitting through the play; when his friends left the tavern and betook themselves to the theatre, he went away by himself; and was subsequently found walking in St. James's Park. The friend who discovered him there persuaded him that his presence in the theatre might be useful in case of an emergency; and ultimately got him to accompany him to Covent Garden. When Goldsmith reached the theatre, the fifth act had been begun.

Oddly enough, the first thing he heard on entering the stage-door was a hiss. The story goes that the poor author was dreadfully frightened; and that in answer to a hurried question, Colman exclaimed, "Psha! Doctor, don't be afraid of a squib, when we have been sitting these two hours on a barrel of gunpowder." If this was meant as a hoax, it was a cruel one: if meant seriously, it was untrue. For the piece had turned out a great hit. From beginning to end of the performance the audience were in a roar of laughter; and the single hiss that Goldsmith unluckily heard was so markedly exceptional, that it became the talk of the town, and was variously attributed to one or other of Goldsmith's rivals. Colman, too, suffered at the hands of the wits for his gloomy and falsified predictions; and had, indeed, to beg Goldsmith to intercede for him. It is a great pity that Boswell was not in London at this time; for then we might have had a description of the supper that naturally would follow the play, and of Goldsmith's demeanour under this new success. Besides the gratification, moreover, of his choice of materials being approved by the public, there was the material benefit accruing to him from the three "author's nights." These are supposed to have produced nearly five hundred pounds—a substantial sum in those days.

Boswell did not come to London till the second of April following; and the first mention we find of Goldsmith is in connection with an incident which has its ludicrous as well as its regrettable aspect. The further success of *She Stoops to Conquer* was not likely to propitiate the wretched hole-and-corner cutthroats that infested the journalism of that day. More especially was Kenrick driven mad with envy; and so, in a letter addressed to the *London Packet*, this poor creature determined once more to set aside the judgment of the public, and show Dr. Goldsmith in his true colours. The letter is a wretched production, full of personalities only fit for an angry washerwoman, and of rancour without point. But there was one passage in it that effectually roused Goldsmith's rage; for here the Jessamy Bride was introduced as "the lovely H—k." The letter was anonymous; but the publisher of the print, a man called Evans, was known; and so Goldsmith thought he would go and give Evans a beating. If he had asked Johnson's advice about the matter, he would no doubt have been told to pay no heed at all to anonymous scurrility—certainly not to attempt to reply to it with a cudgel. When Johnson heard that Foote meant to "take him off," he turned to Davies and asked him what was the common price of an oak stick; but an oak stick in Johnson's hand and an oak stick in Goldsmith's hands were two different things. However, to the bookseller's shop the indignant poet proceeded, in company with a friend; got hold of Evans; accused him of having insulted a young lady by putting her name in his paper; and, when the publisher would fain have shifted the responsibility on to the editor, forthwith denounced him as a rascal, and hit him over the back with his cane. The publisher, however, was quite a match for Goldsmith; and there is no saying how the deadly combat might have ended, had not a lamp been broken overhead, the oil of which drenched both the warriors. This intervention of the superior gods was just as successful as a Homeric cloud; the fray ceased; Goldsmith and his friend withdrew; and ultimately an action for assault was compromised by Goldsmith's paying fifty pounds to a charity. Then the howl of the journals arose. Their prerogative had been assailed. "Attacks upon private character were the most liberal existing source of newspaper income," Mr. Forster writes; and so the pack turned with one cry on the unlucky poet. There was nothing of "the Monument" about poor Goldsmith; and at last he was worried into writing a letter of defence addressed to the public. "He has indeed done it very well," said Johnson to Boswell, "but it is a foolish thing well done." And further he remarked, "Why, sir, I believe it is the first time he has *beat*: he may have *been beaten* before. This, sir, is a new plume to him."

CHAPTER XVII.

INCREASING DIFFICULTIES.—THE END.

THE pecuniary success of *She Stoops to Conquer* did but little to relieve Goldsmith from those financial embarrassments which were now weighing heavily on his mind. And now he had less of the old high spirits that had enabled him to laugh off the cares of debt. His health became disordered; an old disease renewed its attacks, and was grown more violent because of his long-continued sedentary habits. Indeed, from this point to the day of his death —not a long interval, either—we find little but a record of successive endeavours, some of them wild and hopeless enough, to obtain money anyhow. Of course he went to the Club, as usual; and gave dinner-parties; and had a laugh or a song ready for the occasion. It is possible, also, to trace a certain growth of confidence in himself, no doubt the result of the repeated proofs of his genius he had put before his friends. It was something more than mere personal intimacy that justified the rebuke he administered to Reynolds when the latter painted an allegorical picture representing the triumph of Beattie and Truth over Voltaire and Scepticism. "It very ill becomes a man of your eminence and character," he said, "to debase so high a genius as Voltaire before so mean a writer as Beattie. Beattie and his book will be forgotten in ten years, while Voltaire's fame will last forever. Take care it does not perpetuate this picture, to the shame of such a man as you." He was aware, too, of the position he had won for himself in English literature. He knew that people in arter-days would ask about him; and it was with no sort of unwarrantable vainglory that he gave Percy certain materials for a biography which he wished him to undertake. Hence the *Percy Memoir*.

He was only forty-five when he made this request; and he had not suffered much from illness during his life; so that there was apparently no grounds for imagining that the end was near. But at this time Goldsmith began to suffer severe fits of depression; and he grew irritable and capricious of temper—no doubt another result of failing health. He was embroiled in disputes with the booksellers; and, on one occasion, seems to have been much hurt because Johnson, who had been asked to step in as arbiter, decided against him. He was offended with Johnson on another occasion because of his sending away certain dishes at a dinner given to him by Goldsmith, as a hint that these entertainments were too

luxurious for one in Goldsmith's position. It was probably owing to some temporary feeling of this sort—perhaps to some expression of it on Goldsmith's part—that Johnson spoke of Goldsmith's "malice" towards him. Mrs. Thrale had suggested that Goldsmith would be the best person to write Johnson's biography. "The dog would write it best, to be sure," said Johnson, "but his particular malice towards me, and general disregard of truth, would make the book useless to all and injurious to my character." Of course it is always impossible to say what measure of jocular exaggeration there may not be in a chance phrase such as this: of the fact that there was no serious or permanent quarrel between the two friends we have abundant proof in Boswell's faithful pages.

To return to the various endeavours made by Goldsmith and his friends to meet the difficulties now closing in around him, we find first of all, the familiar hack-work. For two volumes of a *History of Greece* he had received from Griffin £250. Then his friends tried to get him a pension from the Government; but this was definitely refused. An expedient of his own seemed to promise well at first. He thought of bringing out a *Popular Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, a series of contributions mostly by his friends, with himself as editor; and among those who offered to assist him were Johnson, Reynolds, Burke, and Dr. Burney. But the booksellers were afraid. The project would involve a large expense; and they had no high opinion of Goldsmith's business habits. Then he offered to alter *The Good natured Man* for Garrick; but Garrick preferred to treat with him for a new comedy, and generously allowed him to draw on him for the money in advance. This last help enabled him to go to Barton for a brief holiday; but the relief was only temporary. On his return to London even his nearest friends began to observe the change in his manner. In the old days Goldsmith had faced pecuniary difficulties with a light heart; but now, his health broken, and every avenue of escape apparently closed, he was giving way to despair. His friend Cradock, coming up to town, found Goldsmith in a most despondent condition; and also hints that the unhappy author was trying to conceal the true state of affairs. "I believe," said Cradock, "he died miserable, and that his friends were not entirely aware of his distress."

And yet it was during this closing period of anxiety, despondency, and gloomy foreboding that the brilliant and humorous lines of *Retaliation* were written—that last scintillation of the bright and happy genius that was soon to be extinguished forever. The most varied accounts have been given of the origin of this *jeu d'esprit*; and even Garrick's, which was meant to supersede and correct all others, is self-contradictory. For according to this version of the story, which was found among the Garrick papers, and which is printed in Mr. Cunningham's edition of Goldsmith's works, the whole thing arose out of Goldsmith and Garrick resolving one evening at the St. James's Coffee-House to write each other's epitaph. Garrick's well-known couplet was instantly produced:

"Here lies Nolly Goldsmith, for shortness called Noll,
Who wrote like an angel, but talked like poor Poll."

Goldsmith, according to Garrick, either would not or could not retort at the moment; "but went to work, and some weeks after produced the following printed poem, called *Retaliation*." But Garrick himself goes on to say, "The following poems in manuscript were written by several of the gentlemen on purpose to provoke the Doctor to an answer, which came forth at last with great credit to him in *Retaliation*." The most probable version of the story, which may be pieced together from various sources, is that at the coffee-house named this business of writing comic epitaphs was started some evening or other by the whole company; that Goldsmith and Garrick pitted themselves against each other; that thereafter Goldsmith began as occasion served to write similar squibs about his friends, which were shown about as they were written; that thereupon those gentlemen, not to be behindhand, composed more elaborate pieces in proof of their wit; and that, finally, Goldsmith resolved to bind these fugitive lines of his together in a poem, which he left unfinished, and which, under the name of *Retaliation*, was published after his death. This hypothetical account receives some confirmation from the fact that the scheme of the poem and its component parts do not fit together well; the introduction looks like an afterthought, and has not the freedom and pungency of a piece of improvisation. An imaginary dinner is described, the guests being Garrick, Reynolds, Burke, Cumberland, and the rest of them, Goldsmith last of all. More wine is called for, until the whole of his companions have fallen beneath the table:

Then, with chaos and blunders encircling my head,
Let me ponder, and tell what I think of the *dead*."

This is a somewhat clumsy excuse for introducing a series of epitaphs; but the epitaphs amply atone for it. That on Garrick is especially remarkable as a bit of character-sketching; its shrewd hints—all in perfect courtesy and good-humour—going a little nearer to the truth than is common in epitaphs of any sort:

"Here lies David Garrick, describe me who can;
An abridgment of all that was pleasant in man.
As an actor, confessed without rival to shine:
As a wit, if not first, in the very first line:
Yet, with talents like these, and an excellent heart,
The man had his failings, a dupe to his art.
Like an ill-judging beauty, his colours he spread,
And beplastered with rouge his own natural red.
On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting;
'Twas only that, when he was off, he was acting.
With no reason on earth to go out of his way,
He turned and he varied full ten times a day:
Though secure of our hearts, yet confoundedly sick

If they were not his own by finessing and trick;
He cast off his friends, as a huntsman his pack,
For he knew when he pleased he could whistle them back.
Of praise a mere glutton, he swallowed what came;
And the puff of a dunce, he mistook it for fame;
Till his relish grown callous, almost to disease,
Who peppered the highest was surest to please
But let us be candid, and speak out our mind:
If dunces applauded, he paid them in kind.
Ye Kenricks, ye Kellys, and Woodfalls so grave,
What a commerce was yours, while you got and you gave!
How did Grub Street re-echo the shouts that you raised,
While he was be-Rosciused, and you were bepraised.
But peace to his spirit, wherever it flies,
To act as an angel and mix with the skies:
Those poets who owe their best fame to his skill
Shall still be his flatterers, go where he will;
Old Shakespeare receive him with praise and with love,
And Beaumonts and Bens be his Kellys above."

The truth is that Goldsmith, though he was ready to bless his "honest little man" when he received from him sixty pounds in advance for a comedy not begun, never took quite so kindly to Garrick as to some of his other friends. There is no pretence of discrimination at all, for example, in the lines devoted in this poem to Reynolds. All the generous enthusiasm of Goldsmith's Irish nature appears here; he will admit of no possible rival to this especial friend of his:

"Here Reynolds is laid, and to tell you my mind,
He has not left a wiser or better behind."

There is a tradition that the epitaph on Reynolds, ending with the unfinished line

"By flattery unspoiled . .

was Goldsmith's last piece of writing. One would like to believe that, in any case.

Goldsmith had returned to his Edgware lodgings, and had, indeed, formed some notion of selling his chambers in the Temple, and living in the country for at least ten months in the year, when a sudden attack of his old disorder drove him into town again for medical advice. He would appear to have received some relief; but a nervous fever followed; and on the night of the 25th March, 1774, when he was but forty-six years of age, he took to his bed for the last time. At first he refused to regard his illness as serious, and insisted on dosing himself with certain fever-powders from which he had received benefit on previous occasions; but by and by as his strength gave way he submitted to the advice of the physicians, who were in attendance on him. Day after day passed, his weakness visibly increasing, though, curiously enough, the symptoms of fever were gradually abating. At length one of the doctors, remarking to him that his pulse was in greater disorder

than it should be from the degree of fever, asked him if his mind was at ease. "No, it is not," answered Goldsmith; and these were his last words. Early in the morning of Monday, April 4th, convulsions set in; these continued for rather more than an hour; then the troubled brain and the sick heart found rest forever.

When the news was carried to his friends, Burke, it is said, burst into tears, and Reynolds put aside his work for the day. But it does not appear that they had visited him during his illness; and neither Johnson nor Reynolds, nor Burke, nor Garrick followed his body to the grave. It is true, a public funeral was talked of; and, among others, Reynolds, Burke, and Garrick were to have carried the pall; but this was abandoned; and Goldsmith was privately buried in the ground of the Temple Church on the 9th of April, 1774. Strangely enough, too, Johnson seems to have omitted all mention of Goldsmith from his letters to Boswell. It was not until Boswell had written to him, on June 24th, "You have said nothing to me about poor Goldsmith," that Johnson, writing on July 4th, answered as follows: "Of poor dear Dr. Goldsmith there is little to be told, more than the papers have made public. He died of a fever, made, I am afraid, more violent by uneasiness of mind. His debts began to be heavy, and all his resources were exhausted. Sir Joshua is of opinion that he owed not less than two thousand pounds. Was ever poet so trusted before?"

But if the greatest grief at the sudden and premature death of Goldsmith would seem to have been shown at the moment by certain wretched creatures who were found weeping on the stairs leading to his chambers, it must not be supposed that his fine friends either forgot him, or ceased to regard his memory with a great gentleness and kindness. Some two years after, when a monument was about to be erected to Goldsmith in Westminster Abbey, Johnson consented to write "the poor dear Doctor's epitaph;" and so anxious were the members of that famous circle in which Goldsmith had figured, that a just tribute should be paid to his genius, that they even ventured to send a round-robin to the great Cham desiring him to amend his first draft. Now, perhaps, we have less interest in Johnson's estimate of Goldsmith's genius—though it contains the famous *Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit*—than in the phrases which tell of the honour paid to the memory of the dead poet by the love of his companions and the faithfulness of his friends. It may here be added that the precise spot where Goldsmith was buried in the Temple church-yard is unknown. So lived and so died Oliver Goldsmith.

In the foregoing pages the writings of Goldsmith have been given so prominent a place in the history of his life that it is unnecessary to take them here collectively and endeavour to sum up their distinctive qualities. As much as could be said within the limited space has, it is hoped, been said about their genuine and tender

pathos, that never at any time verges on the affected or theatrical; about their quaint, delicate, delightful humour; about that broader humour that is not afraid to provoke the wholesome laughter of mankind by dealing with common and familiar ways, and manners and men; about that choiceness of diction, that lightness and grace of touch, that lend a charm even to Goldsmith's ordinary hack-work.

Still less necessary, perhaps, is it to review the facts and circumstances of Goldsmith's life, and to make of them an example, a warning, or an accusation. That has too often been done. His name has been used to glorify a sham Bohemianism—a Bohemianism that finds it easy to live in taverns, but does not find it easy, so far as one sees, to write poems like the *Deserted Village*. His experiences as an author have been brought forward to swell the cry about neglected genius—that is, by writers who assume their genius in order to prove the neglect. The misery that occasionally befell him during his wayward career has been made the basis of an accusation against society, the English constitution, Christianity —Heaven knows what. It is time to have done with all this nonsense. Goldsmith resorted to the hack-work of literature when every thing else had failed him; and he was fairly paid for it. When he did better work, when he "struck for honest fame," the nation gave him all the honour that he could have desired. With an assured reputation, and with ample means of subsistence, he obtained entrance into the most distinguished society then in England—he was made the friend of England's greatest in the arts and literature—and could have confined himself to that society exclusively if he had chosen. His temperament, no doubt, exposed him to suffering; and the exquisite sensitiveness of a man of genius may demand our sympathy; but in far greature measure is our sympathy demanded for the thousands upon thousands of people who, from illness or nervous excitability, suffer from quite as keen a sensitiveness without the consolation of the fame that genius brings.

In plain truth, Goldsmith himself would have been the last to put forward pleas humiliating alike to himself and to his calling. Instead of beseeching the State to look after authors; instead of imploring society to grant them "recognition;" instead of saying of himself "he wrote, and paid the penalty;" he would frankly have admitted that he chose to live his life his own way, and therefore paid the penalty. This is not written with any desire of upbraiding Goldsmith. He did choose to live his own life his own way, and we now have the splended and beautiful results of his work; and the world—looking at these with a constant admiration, and with a great and lenient love for their author—is not anxious to know what he did with his guineas, or whether the milkman was ever paid. "He had raised money and squandered it, by every artifice of acquisition and folly of expense. BUT LET NOT HIS FRAILTIES BE REMEMBERED: HE WAS A VERY GREAT MAN." This is Johnson's wise summing up; and with it we may here take leave of gentle Goldsmith.

ALEXANDER POPE

BY

LESLIE STEPHEN

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POPE.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS.

THE father of Alexander Pope was a London merchant, a devout Catholic, and not improbably a convert to Catholicism. His mother was one of seventeen children of William Turner, of York; one of her sisters was the wife of Cooper, the well-known portrait-painter. Mrs. Cooper was the poet's godmother; she died when he was five years old, leaving to her sister, Mrs. Pope, "a grinding-stone and muller," and their mother's "picture in limning;" and to her nephew, the little Alexander, all her "books, pictures, and medals set in gold or otherwise."

In after-life the poet made some progress in acquiring the art of painting; and the bequest suggests the possibility that the precocious child had already given some indications of artistic taste. Affectionate eyes were certainly on the watch for any symptoms of developing talent. Pope was born on May 21, 1688—the *annus mirabilis* which introduced a new political era in England, and was fatal to the hopes of ardent Catholics. About the same time, partly, perhaps, in consequence of the catastrophe, Pope's father retired from business, and settled at Binfield, a village two miles from Wokingham and nine from Windsor. It is near Bracknell, one of Shelley's brief perching places, and in such a region as poets might love, if poetic praises of rustic seclusion are to be taken seriously. To the east were the "forests and green retreats" of Windsor; and the wild heaths of Bagshot, Chobham, and Aldershot stretched for miles to the south. Some twelve miles off in that direction, one may remark, lay Moor Park, where the sturdy pedestrian, Swift, was living with Sir W. Temple during great part of Pope's childhood; but it does not appear that his walks ever took him to Pope's neighbourhood, nor did he see, till some years later, the lad with whom he was to form one of the most famous of literary friendships. The little household was presumably a very quiet one, and remained fixed at Binfield for twenty-seven years, till the son had grown to manhood and celebrity. From the earliest period he seems to have been a domestic

fact. He was not an only child, for he had a half-sister, by his father's side, who must have been considerably older than himself, as her mother died nine years before the poet's birth. But he was the only child of his mother, and his parents concentrated upon him an affection which he returned with touching ardour and persistence. They were both forty-six in the year of his birth. He inherited headaches from his mother, and a crooked figure from his father. A nurse who shared their care lived with him for many years, and was buried by him, with an affectionate epitaph, in 1725. The family tradition represents him as a sweet-tempered child, and says that he was called the "little nightingale" from the beauty of his voice. As the sickly, solitary, and precocious infant of elderly parents, we may guess that he was not a little spoilt, if only in the technical sense.

The religion of the family made their seclusion from the world the more rigid, and by consequence must have strengthened their mutual adhesiveness. Catholics were then harassed by a legislation which would be condemned by any modern standard as intolerably tyrannical. Whatever apology may be urged for the legislators on the score of contemporary prejudices or special circumstances, their best excuse is that their laws were rather intended to satisfy constituents, and to supply a potential means of defence, than to be carried into actual execution. It does not appear that the Popes had to fear any active molestation in the quiet observance of their religious duties. Yet a Catholic was not only a member of a hated minority, regarded by the rest of his countrymen as representing the evil principle in politics and religion, but was rigorously excluded from a public career, and from every position of honour or authority. In times of excitement the severer laws might be put in force. The public exercise of the Catholic religion was forbidden. and to be a Catholic was to be predisposed to the various Jacobite intrigues which still had many chances in their favour. When the Pretender was expected in 1744, a proclamation, to which Pope thought it decent to pay obedience, forbade the appearance of Catholics within ten miles of London; and in 1730 we find him making interest on behalf of a nephew, who had been prevented from becoming an attorney because the judges were rigidly enforcing the oaths of supremacy and allegiance.

The Catholics had to pay double taxes, and were prohibited from acquiring real property. The elder Pope, according to a certainly inaccurate story, had a conscientious objection to investing his money in the funds of a Protestant government, and, therefore, having converted his capital into coin, put it in a strong-box, and took it out as he wanted it. The old merchant was not quite so helpless, for we know that he had investments in the French *rentes*, besides other sources of income; but the story probably reflects the fact that his religious disqualifications hampered even his financial position.

Pope's character was affected in many ways by the fact of his

belonging to a sect thus harassed and restrained. Persecution, like bodily infirmity, has an ambiguous influence. If it sometimes generates in its victims a heroic hatred of oppression, it sometimes predisposes them to the use of the weapons of intrigue and falsehood, by which the weak evade the tyranny of the strong. If under that discipline Pope learnt to love toleration, he was not untouched by the more demoralising influences of a life passed in an atmosphere of incessant plotting and evasion. A more direct consequence was his exclusion from the ordinary schools. The spirit of the rickety lad might have been broken by the rough training of Eton or Westminster in those days; as, on the other hand, he might have profited by acquiring a livelier perception of the meaning of that virtue of fair-play, the appreciation of which is held to be a set-off against the brutalising influences of our system of public education. As it was, Pope was condemned to a desultory education. He picked up some rudiments of learning from the family priest; he was sent to a school at Twyford, where he is said to have got into trouble for writing a lampoon upon his master: he went for a short time to another in London, where he gave a more creditable if less characteristic proof of his poetical precocity. Like other lads of genius, he put together a kind of play—a combination, it seems, of the speeches in Ogilby's Iliad—and got it acted by his schoolfellows. These brief snatches of schooling, however, counted for little. Pope settled at home at the early age of twelve, and plunged into the delights of miscellaneous reading with the ardour of precocious talent. He read so eagerly that his feeble constitution threatened to break down, and when about seventeen, he despaired of recovery, and wrote a farewell to his friends. One of them, an Abbé Southcote, applied for advice to the celebrated Dr. Radcliffe, who judiciously prescribed idleness and exercise. Pope soon recovered, and, it is pleasant to add, showed his gratitude long afterwards by obtaining for Southcote, through Sir Robert Walpole, a desirable piece of French preferment. Self-guided studies have their advantages, as Pope himself observed, but they do not lead a youth through the dry places of literature, or stimulate him to severe intellectual training. Pope seems to have made some hasty raids into philosophy and theology; he dipped into Locke, and found him "insipid;" he went through a collection of the controversial literature of the reign of James II., which seems to have constituted the paternal library, and was alternately Protestant and Catholic, according to the last book which he had read. But it was upon poetry and pure literature that he flung himself with a genuine appetite. He learnt languages to get at the story, unless a translation offered an easier path, and followed wherever fancy led, "like a boy gathering flowers in the fields and woods."

It is needless to say that he never became a scholar in the strict sense of the term. Voltaire declared that he could hardly read or speak a word of French; and his knowledge of Greek would have satisfied Bentley as little as his French satisfied Voltaire. Yet he

must have been fairly conversant with the best known French literature of the time, and he could probably stumble through Homer with the help of a crib and a guess at the general meaning. He says himself that at this early period he went through all the best critics; all the French, English and Latin poems of any name; "Homer and some of the greater Greek poets in the original," and Tasso and Ariosto in translations.

Pope, at any rate, acquired a wide knowledge of English poetry. Waller, Spenser and Dryden were, he says, his great favourites in the order named, till he was twelve. Like so many other poets, he took infinite delight in the *Faery Queen;* but Dryden, the great poetical luminary of his own day, naturally exercised a predominant influence upon his mind. He declared that he had learnt versification wholly from Dryden's works, and always mentioned his name with reverence. Many scattered remarks reported by Spense, and the still more conclusive evidence of frequent appropriation, show him to have been familiar with the poetry of the preceding century, and with much that had gone out of fashion in his time, to a degree in which he was probably excelled by none of his successors, with the exception of Gray. Like Gray, he contemplated at one time the history of English poetry, which was in some sense executed by Warton. It is characteristic, too, that he early showed a critical spirit. From a boy, he says, he could distinguish between sweetness and softness of numbers—Dryden exemplifying softness, and Waller sweetness; and the remark, whatever its value, shows that he had been analysing his impressions and reflecting upon the technical secrets of his art.

Such study naturally suggests the trembling aspiration, "I, too, am a poet." Pope adopts with apparent sincerity the Ovidian phrase,

> "As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
> I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came."

His father corrected his early performances, and, when not satisfied, sent him back with the phrase, "These are not good rhymes." He translated any passages that struck him in his reading, excited by the examples of Ogilby's Homer and Sandys' Ovid. His boyish ambition prompted him, before he was fifteen, to attempt an epic poem; the subject was Alcander, Prince of Rhodes, driven from his home by Deucalion, father of Minos; and the work was modestly intended to emulate in different passages the beauties of Milton, Cowley, Spenser, Statius, Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and Claudian. Four books of this poem survived for a long time, for Pope had a more than parental fondness for all the children of his brain, and always had an eye to possible reproduction. Scraps from this early epic were worked into the Essay on Criticism and the Dunciad. This couplet, for example, from the last work comes straight, we are told, from Alcander,—

> "As man's Mæanders to the vital spring
> Roll all their tides, then back their circles bring."

Another couplet, preserved by Spense, will give a sufficient taste of its quality :—

> "Shields, helms, and swords all jangle as they hang,
> And sound formidinous with angry clang."

After this we shall hardly censure Atterbury for approving (perhaps suggesting) its destruction in later years. Pope long meditated another epic, relating the foundation of the English government by Brutus of Troy, with a superabundant display of didactic morality and religion. Happily this dreary conception, though it occupied much thought, never came to the birth.

The time soon came when these tentative flights were to be superseded by more serious efforts. Pope's ambition was directed into the same channel by his innate propensities, and by the accidents of his position. No man ever displayed a more exclusive devotion to literature, or was more tremblingly sensitive to the charm of literary glory. His zeal was never distracted by any rival emotion. Almost from his cradle to his grave his eye was fixed unremittingly upon the sole purpose of his life. The whole energies of his mind were absorbed in the struggle to place his name as high as possible in that temple of fame which he painted after Chaucer in one of his early poems. External conditions pointed to letters as the sole path to eminence, but it was precisely the path for which he had admirable qualifications. The sickly son of the Popish tradesman was cut off from the Bar, the Senate, and the Church. Physically contemptible, politically ostracised, and in a humble social position, he could yet win this dazzling prize and force his way with his pen to the highest pinnacle of contemporary fame. Without adventitious favour, and in spite of many bitter antipathies, he was to become the acknowledged head of English literature, and the welcome companion of all the most eminent men of his time. Though he could not forsee his career from the start, he worked as vigorously as if the goal had already been in sight; and each successive victory in the field of letters was realised the more keenly from his sense of the disadvantages in face of which it had been won. In tracing his rapid ascent, we shall certainly find reason to doubt his proud assertion,—

> "That, if he pleased, he pleased by manly ways ;"

but it is impossible for any lover of literature to grudge admiration to this singular triumph of pure intellect over external disadvantages, and the still more depressing influences of incessant physical suffering.

Pope had, indeed, certain special advantages which he was not slow in turning to account. In one respect even his religion helped him to emerge into fame. There was naturally a certain freemasonry amongst the Catholics allied by fellow-feeling under the general antipathy. The relations between Pope and his co-relig-

ionists exercised a material influence upon his later life. Within a few miles of Binfield lived the Blounts of Mapledurham, a fine old Elizabethan mansion on the banks of the Thames, near Reading, which had been held by a royalist Blount in the civil war against a parliamentary assault. It was a more interesting circumstance to Pope that Mr. Lister Blount, the then representative of the family, had two fair daughters, Teresa and Martha, of about the poet's age. Another of Pope's Catholic acquaintances was John Caryll, of West Grinstead in Sussex, nephew of a Caryll who had been the representative of James II. at the Court of Rome, and who followed his master into exile, received the honours of a titular peerage and held office in the melancholy court of the Pretender. In such circles Pope might have been expected to imbibe a Jacobite and Catholic horror of Whigs and freethinkers. In fact, however, he belonged from his youth to the followers of Gallio, and seems to have paid to religious duties just as much attention as would satisfy his parents. His mind was really given to literature; and he found his earliest patron in his immediate neighbourhood. This was Sir W. Trumbull, who had retired to his native village of Easthampstead in 1697, after being ambassador at the Porte under James II., and Secretary of State under William III. Sir William made acquaintance with the Popes, praised the father's artichokes, and was delighted with the precocious son. The old diplomatist and the young poet soon became fast friends, took constant rides together, and talked over classic and modern poetry. Pope made Trumbull acquainted with Milton's Juvenile poems, and Trumbull encouraged Pope to follow in Milton's steps. He gave, it seems, the first suggestion to Pope that he should translate Homer; and he exhorted his young friend to preserve his health by flying from tavern company—*tanquam ex incendio.* Another early patron was William Walsh, a Worcestershire country gentleman of fortune and fashion, who condescended to dabble in poetry after the manner of Waller, and to write remonstrances upon Celia's cruelty, verses to his mistress against marriage, epigrams, and pastoral eclogues. He was better known, however, as a critic, and had been declared by Dryden to be, without flattery, the best in the nation. Pope received from him one piece of advice which has become famous. We had had great poets—so said the "knowing Walsh," as Pope calls him—" but never one great poet that was correct; " and he accordingly recommended Pope to make correctness his great aim. The advice doubtless impressed the young man as the echo of his own convictions. Walsh died (1708) before the effect of his suggestion had become fully perceptible.

The acquaintance with Walsh was due to Wycherley, who had submitted Pope's Pastorals to his recognised critical authority. Pope's intercourse with Wycherley and another early friend, Henry Cromwell, had a more important bearing upon his early career. He kept up a correspondence with each of these friends, whilst he was still passing through his probationary period; and the letters, published long afterwards under singular circumstances to

be hereafter related give the fullest revelation of his character and position at this time. Both Wycherley and Cromwell were known to the Englefields of Whiteknights, near Reading, a Catholic family, in which Pope first made the acquaintance of Martha Blount, whose mother was a daughter of the old Mr. Englefield of the day. It was possibly, therefore, through this connexion that Pope owed his first introduction to the literary circles of London. Pope, already thirsting for literary fame, was delighted to form a connexion which must have been far from satisfactory to his indulgent parents, if they understood the character of his new associates.

Henry Cromwell, a remote cousin of the Protector, is known to other than minute investigators of contemporary literature by nothing except his friendship with Pope. He was nearly thirty years older than Pope, and, though heir to an estate in the country, was at this time a gay, though elderly man, about town. Vague intimations are preserved of his personal appearance. Gay calls him "honest, hatless Cromwell with red breeches;" and Johnson could learn about him the single fact that he used to ride a-hunting in a tie-wig. The interpretation of these outward signs may not be very obvious to modern readers; but it is plain from other indications that he was one of the frequenters of coffee-houses, aimed at being something of a rake and a wit, was on speaking terms with Dryden, and familiar with the smaller celebrities of literature, a regular attendant at theatres, a friend of actresses, and able to present himself in fashionable circles and devote complimentary verses to the reigning beauties at the Bath. When he studied the *Spectator* he might recognise some of his features reflected in the portrait of Will Honeycomb. Pope was proud enough for the moment at being taken by the hand by this elderly buck, though, as Pope himself rose in the literary scale and could estimate literary reputations more accurately, he became, it would seem, a little ashamed of his early enthusiasm, and, at any rate, the friendship dropped. The letters which passed between the pair during four or five years, down to the end of 1711, show Pope in his earliest manhood. They are characteristic of that period of development in which a youth of literary genius takes literary fame in the most deliberately serious sense. Pope is evidently putting his best foot forward, and never for a moment forgets that he is a young author writing to a recognised critic—except, indeed, when he takes the airs of an experienced rake. We might speak of the absurd affectation displayed in the letters, were it not that such affectation is the most genuine nature in a clever boy. Unluckily, it became so ingrained in Pope as to survive his youthful follies. Pope complacently indulges in elaborate paradoxes and epigrams of the conventional epistolary style; he is painfully anxious to be alternately sparkling and playful: his head must be full of literature; he indulges in an elaborate criticism of Statius, and points out what a sudden fall that author makes at one place from extravagant bombast; he communicates the latest efforts of his muse, and

tries, one regrets to say, to get more credit for precocity and originality than fairly belongs to him; he accidentally alludes to his dog that he may bring in a translation from the Odyssey, quote Plutarch, and introduce an anecdote which he has heard from Trumbull about Charles I.; he elaborately discusses Cromwell's classical translations, adduces authorities, ventures to censure Mr. Rowe's amplification of Lucan, and, in this respect, thinks that Brebœuf, the famous French translator, is equally a sinner, and writes a long letter as to the proper use of the cæsura and the hiatus in English verse. There are signs that the mutual criticisms became a little trying to the tempers of the correspondents. Pope seems to be inclined to ridicule Cromwell's pedantry, and when he affects satisfaction at learning that Cromwell has detected him in appropriating a rondeau from Voiture, we feel that the tension is becoming serious. Probably he found out that Cromwell was not only a bit of a prig, but a person not likely to reflect much glory upon his friends, and the correspondence came to an end, when Pope found a better market for his wares.

Pope speaks more than once in these letters of his country retirement, where he could enjoy the company of the muses, but where, on the other hand, he was forced to be grave and godly, instead of drunk and scandalous as he could be in town. The jolly hunting and drinking squires round Binfield thought him, he says, a well-disposed person, but unluckily disqualified for their rough modes of enjoyment by his sickly health. With them he has not been able to make one Latin quotation, but has learnt a song of Tom Durfey's, the sole representative of literature, it appears, at the "toping-tables" of these thick-witted fox-hunters. Pope naturally longed for the more refined, or at least more fashionable indulgences of London life. Besides the literary affectation, he sometimes adopts the more offensive affectation—unfortunately not peculiar to any period—of the youth who wishes to pass himself off as deep in the knowledge of the world. Pope, as may be here said once for all, could be at times grossly indecent; and in these letters there are passages offensive upon this score, though the offence is far graver when the same tendency appears, as it sometimes does, in his letters to women. There is no proof that Pope was ever licentious in practice. He was probably more temperate than most of his companions, and could be accused of fewer lapses from strict morality than, for example, the excellent but thoughtless Steele. For this there was the very good reason that his "little, tender, crazy carcass," as Wycherley calls it, was utterly unfit for such excesses as his companions could practice with comparative impunity. He was bound under heavy penalties to be through life a valetudinarian, and such doses of wine as the respectable Addison used regularly to absorb would have brought speedy punishment. Pope's loose talk probably meant little enough in the way of active vice, though, as I have already said, Trumbull saw reasons for friendly warning. But some of his writings are stained by pruriency and downright obscenity; whilst the same

fault may be connected with a painful absence of that chivalrous feeling towards women which redeems Steele's errors of conduct in our estimate of his character. Pope always takes a low, sometimes a brutal view of the relation between the sexes.

Enough, however, has been said upon this point. If Pope erred, he was certainly unfortunate in the objects of his youthful hero-worship. Cromwell seems to have been but a pedantic hanger-on of literary circles. His other great friend, Wycherley, had stronger claims upon his respect, but certainly was not likely to raise his standard of delicacy. Wycherley was a relic of a past literary epoch. He was nearly fifty years older than Pope. His last play, the *Plain Dealer*, had been produced in 1677, eleven years before Pope's birth. The *Plain Dealer* and the *Country Wife*, his chief performances, are conspicuous amongst the comedies of the Restoration dramatists for sheer brutality. During Pope's boyhood he was an elderly rake about town, having squandered his intellectual as well as his pecuniary resources, but still scribbling bad verses and maxims on the model of Rochefoucauld. Pope had a very excusable, perhaps we may say creditable, enthusiasm for the acknowledged representatives of literary glory. Before he was twelve years old he had persuaded some one to take him to Will's, that he might have a sight of the venerable Dryden; and in the first published letter* to Wycherley he refers to this brief glimpse, and warmly thanks Wycherley for some conversation about the elder poet. And thus, when he came to know Wycherley, he was enraptured with the honour. He followed the great man about, as he tells us, like a dog; and, doubtless, received with profound respect the anecdotes of literary life which fell from the old gentleman's lips. Soon a correspondence began, in which Pope adopts a less jaunty air than that of his letters to Cromwell, but which is conducted on both sides in the laboured complimentary style which was not unnatural in the days when Congreve's comedy was taken to represent the conversation of fashionable life. Presently, however, the letters began to turn upon an obviously dangerous topic. Pope was only seventeen when it occurred to his friend to turn him to account as a literary assistant. The lad had already shown considerable powers of versification, and was soon employing them in the revision of some of the numerous compositions which amused Wycherley's leisure. It would have required, one might have thought, less than Wycherley's experience to foresee the natural end of such an alliance. Pope, in fact, set to work with great vigour in his favourite occupation of correcting. He hacked and hewed right and left; omitted, compressed, rearranged, and occasionally inserted additions of his own devising. Wycherley's memory had been enfeebled by illness, and now played him strange tricks. He was in the habit of reading himself to sleep with Montaigne, Rochefoucauld, and Racine. Next morning he would, with entire unconsciousness,

* The letter is, unluckily, of doubtful authenticity; but it represents Pope's probable sentiments.

write down as his own the thoughts of his author, or repeat almost word for word some previous composition of his own. To remove such repetitions thoroughly would require a very free application of the knife, and Pope would not be slow to discover that he was wasting talents fit for original work in botching and tinkering a mass of rubbish.

Any man of ripe years would have predicted the obvious consequences; and, according to the ordinary story, those consequences followed. Pope became more plains-peaking, and at last almost insulting in his language. Wycherley ended by demanding the return of his manuscripts, in a letter showing his annoyance under a veil of civility; and Pope sent them back with a smart reply, recommending Wycherley to adopt a previous suggestion and turn his poetry into maxims after the manner of Rochefoucauld. The "old scribbler," says Johnson, "was angry to see his pages defaced, and felt more pain from the criticism than content from the amendment of his faults." The story is told at length, and with his usual brilliance, by Macaulay, and has hitherto passed muster with all Pope's biographers; and, indeed, it is so natural a story, and is so far confirmed by other statements of Pope, that it seems a pity to spoil it. And yet it must be at least modified, for we have already reached one of those perplexities which force a biographer of Pope to be constantly looking to his footsteps. So numerous are the contracditions which surround almost every incident of the poet's career, that one is constantly in danger of stumbling into some pitfall, or bound to cross it in gingerly fashion on the stepping-stone of a cautious "perhaps." The letters which are the authority for this story have undergone a manipulation from Pope himself, under circumstances to be hereafter noticed; and recent researches have shown that a very false colouring has been put upon this as upon other passages. The nature of this strange perversion is a curious illustration of Pope's absorbing vanity.

Pope, in fact, was evidently ashamed of the attitude which he had not unnaturally adopted to his correspondent. The first man of letters of his day could not bear to reveal the full degree in which he had fawned upon the decayed dramatist, whose inferiority to himself was now plainly recognised. He altered the whole tone of the correspondence by omission, and still worse by addition. He did not publish a letter in which Wycherley gently remonstrates with his young admirer for excessive adulation; he omitted from his own letters the phrase which had provoked the remonstrance; and, with more daring falsification, he manufactured an imaginary letter to Wycherley out of a letter really addressed to his friend Caryll. In this letter Pope had himself addressed to Caryll a remonstrance similar to that which he had received from Wycherley. When published as a letter to Wycherley, it gives the impression that Pope, at the age of seventeen, was already rejecting excessive compliments addressed to him by his experienced friend. By these audacious perversions of the truth, Pope is enabled to

heighten his youthful independence, and to represent himself as already exhibiting a graceful superiority to the reception or the offering of incense; while he thus precisely inverts the relation which really existed between himself and his correspondent.

The letters, again, when read with due attention to dates, shows that Wycherley's proneness to take offence has at least been exaggerated. Pope's services to Wycherley were rendered on two separate occasions. The first set of poems were corrected during 1706 and 1707; and Wycherley, in speaking of this revision, far from showing symptoms of annoyance, speaks with gratitude of Pope's kindness, and returns the expression of good-will which accompanied his criticisms. Both these expressions, and Wycherley's acknowledgment of them, were omitted in Pope's publication. More than two years elapsed, when (in April, 1710) Wycherley submitted a new set of manuscripts to Pope's unflinching severity; and it is from the letters which passed in regard to this last batch that the general impression as to the nature of the quarrel has been derived. But these letters, again, have been mutilated, and so mutilated as to increase the apparent tartness of the mutual retorts; and it must therefore remain doubtful how far the coolness which ensued was really due to the cause assigned. Pope, writing at the time to Cromwell, expresses his vexation at the difference, and professes himself unable to account for it, though he thinks that his corrections may have been the cause of the rupture. An alternative rumour,* it seems, accused Pope of having written some satirical verses upon his friend. To discover the rights and wrongs of the quarrel is now impossible, though, unfortunately, one thing is clear, namely, that Pope was guilty of grossly sacrificing truth in the interests of his own vanity. We may, indeed, assume, without much risk of error, that Pope had become too conscious of his own importance to find pleasure or pride in doctoring another man's verses. It must remain uncertain how far he showed this resentment to Wycherley openly, or gratified it by some covert means; and how far, again, he succeeded in calming Wycherley's susceptibility by his compliments, or aroused his wrath by more or less contemptuous treatment of his verses.

A year after the quarrel, Cromwell reported that Wycherley had again been speaking in friendly terms of Pope, and Pope expressed his pleasure with eagerness. He must, he said, be more agreeable to himself when agreeable to Wycherley, as the earth was brighter when the sun was less overcast. Wycherley, it may be remarked, took Pope's advice by turning some of his verses into prose maxims; and they seem to have been at last upon more or less friendly terms. The final scene of Wycherley's questionable career, some four years later, is given by Pope in a letter to his friend, Edward Blount. The old man, he says, joined the sacraments of marriage and extreme unction. By one he supposed himself to gain some advantage of his soul; by the other, he had the pleasure of saddling his hated heir and nephew with the jointure of

* See Elwin's Pope, vol. i. cxxxv.

his widow. When dying, he begged his wife to grant him a last request, and, upon her consent, explained it to be that she would never again marry an old man. Sickness, says Pope in comment, often destroys wit and wisdom, but has seldom the power to remove humour. Wycherley's joke, replies a critic, is contemptible; and yet one feels that the death scene, with this strange mixture of cynicism, spite, and superstition, half redeemed by imperturbable good temper, would not be unworthy of a place in Wycherley's own school of comedy. One would wish that Pope had shown a little more perception of the tragic side of such a conclusion.

Pope was still almost a boy when he broke with Wycherley; but he was already beginning to attract attention, and within a surprisingly short time he was becoming known as one of the first writers of the day. I must now turn to the poems by which this reputation was gained, and the incidents connected with their publication. In Pope's life, almost more than in that of any other poet, the history of the author is the history of the man.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST PERIOD OF POPE'S LITERARY CAREER

POPE'S rupture with Wycherley took place in the summer of 1710, when Pope, therefore, was just twenty-two. He was at this time only known as the contributor of some small poems to a Miscellany. Three years afterwards (1713) he was receiving such patronage in his great undertaking, the translation of Homer, as to prove conclusively that he was regarded by the leaders of literature as a poet of very high promise; and two years later (1715) the appearance of the first volume of his translation entitled him to rank as the first poet of the day. So rapid a rise to fame has had few parallels, and was certainly not approached until Byron woke and found himself famous at twenty-four. Pope was eager for the praise of remarkable precocity, and was weak and insincere enough to alter the dates of some of his writings in order to strengthen his claim. Yet, even when we accept the corrected accounts of recent enquirers, there is no doubt that he gave proofs at a very early age of an extraordinary command of the resources of his art. It is still more evident that his merits were promptly and frankly recognised by his contemporaries. Great men and distinguished authors held out friendly hands to him; and he never had to undergo, even for a brief period, the dreary ordeal of neglect through which men of loftier but less popular genius, have been so often compelled to pass. And yet it unfortunately happened that, even in this early time, when success followed success, and the young man's irritable nerves might well have been soothed by the general chorus of admiration, he excited and returned bitter antipathies, some of which lasted through his life.

Pope's works belong to three distinct periods. The translation of Homer was the great work of the middle period of his life. In his later years he wrote the moral and satirical poems by which he is now best known. The earlier period, with which I have now to deal, was one of experimental excursions into various fields of poetry, with varying success and rather uncertain aim. Pope had already, as we have seen, gone through the process of "filling his basket." He had written the epic poem which happily found its

way into the flames. He had translated many passages that struck his fancy in the classics, especially considerable fragments of Ovid and Statius. Following Dryden, he had turned some of Chaucer into modern English; and adopting a fashion which had not as yet quite died of inanition, he had composed certain pastorals in the manner of Theocritus and Virgil. These early productions had been written under the eye of Trumbull; they had been handed about in manuscript; Wycherley, as already noticed, had shown them to Walsh, himself an offender of the same class. Granville, afterwards Lord Lansdowne, another small poet, read them, and professed to see in Pope another Virgil; whilst Congreve, Garth, Somers, Halifax, and other men of weight condescended to read, admire, and criticise. Old Tonson, who had published for Dryden, wrote a polite note to Pope, then only seventeen, saying that he had seen one of the Pastorals in the hands of Congreve and Walsh, "which was extremely fine," and requesting the honour of printing it. Three years afterwards it accordingly appeared in Tonson's Miscellany, a kind of annual, of which the first numbers had been edited by Dryden. Such miscellanies more or less discharged the function of a modern magazine. The plan, said Pope to Wycherley, is very useful to the poets, "who, like other thieves, escape by getting into a crowd." The volume contained contributions from Buckingham, Garth, and Rowe; it closed with Pope's Pastorals, and opened with another set of pastorals by Ambrose Philips—a combination which, as we shall see, led to one of Pope's first quarrels.

The Pastorals have been seriously criticised; but they are, in truth, mere school-boy exercises; they represent nothing more than so many experiments in versification. The pastoral form had doubtless been used in earlier hands to embody true poetic feeling; but in Pope's time it had become hopelessly threadbare. The fine gentlemen in wigs and laced coats amused themselves by writing about nymphs and "conscious swains," by way of asserting their claims to elegance of taste. Pope, as a boy, took the matter seriously, and always retained a natural fondness for a juvenile performance upon which he had expended great labour, and which was the chief proof of his extreme precocity. He invites attention to his own merits, and claims especially the virtue of propriety. He does not, he tells us, like some other people, make his roses and daffodils bloom in the same season, and cause his nightingales to sing in November; and he takes particular credit for having remembered that there were no wolves in England, and having accordingly excised a passage in which Alexis prophesied that those animals would grow milder as they listened to the strains of his favourite nymph. When a man has got so far as to bring to England all the pagan deities, and rival shepherds contending for bowls and lambs in alternate strophes, these niceties seem a little out of place. After swallowing such a camel of an anachronism as is contained in the following lines, it is ridiculous to pride oneself upon straining at a gnat:—

Inspire me, says Strephon,

> "Inspire me, Phœbus, in my Delia's praise
> With Waller's strains or Granville's moving lays
> A milk-white bull shall at your altars stand,
> That threats a fight, and spurns the rising sand."

Granville would certainly not have felt more surprised at meeting a wolf than at seeing a milk-white bull sacrificed to Phœbus on the banks of the Thames. It would be a more serious complaint that Pope, who can thus admit anachronism as daring any of those which provoked Johnson in Lycidas, shows none of that exquisite feeling for rural scenery which is one of the superlative charms of Milton's early poems. Though country-bred, he talks of country sights and sounds as if he had been brought up at Christ's Hospital, and read of them only in Virgil. But, in truth, it is absurd to dwell upon such points. The sole point worth notice in the Pastorals is the general sweetness of the versification. Many corrections show how carefully Pope had elaborated those early lines, and by what patient toil he was acquiring the peculiar qualities of style in which he was to become pre-eminent. We may agree with Johnson that Pope performing upon a pastoral pipe is rather a ludicrous person, but for mere practice even nonsense verses have been found useful.

The young gentleman was soon to give a far more characteristic specimen of his peculiar powers. Poets, according to the ordinary rule, should begin by exuberant fancy, and learn to prune and refine as the reasoning faculties develope. But Pope was from the first a conscious and deliberate artist. He had read the fashionable critics of his time, and had accepted their canons as an embodiment of irrefragable reason. His head was full of maxims, some of which strike us as palpable truisms, and others as typical specimens of wooden pedantry. Dryden had set the example of looking upon the French critics as authoritative lawgivers in poetry. Boileau's art of poetry was carefully studied, as bits of it were judiciously appropriated, by Pope. Another authority was the great Bossu, who wrote in 1675 a treatise on epic poetry; and the modern reader may best judge of the doctrines characteristic of the school by the naïve pedantry with which Addison, the typical man of taste of his time, invokes the authority of Bossu and Aristotle, in his exposition of Paradise Lost.* English writers were treading in the steps of Boileau and Horace. Roscommon selected for a poem the lively topic of "translated verse;" and Sheffield had written with Dryden an essay upon satire, and afterwards a more elaborate essay upon poetry. To these masterpieces, said Addison, another masterpiece was now added by Pope's Essay upon Criticism. Not only did Addison applaud, but later critics have spoken of their wonder at the penetration, learning, and taste exhibited by so young a man. The essay was carefully finished. Written apparently in

* Any poet who followed Bossu's rules, said Voltaire, might be certain that no one would read him; happily it was impossible to follow them.

1709, it was published in 1711. This was as short a time, said Pope to Spence, as he ever let anything of his lie by him; he no doubt employed it, according to his custom, in correcting and revising, and he had prepared himself by carefully digesting the whole in prose. It is, however, written without any elaborate logical plan, though it is quite sufficiently coherent for its purpose. The maxims on which Pope chiefly dwells are, for the most part, the obvious rules which have been the common property of all generations of critics. One would scarcely ask for originality in such a case, any more than one would desire a writer on ethics to invent new laws of morality. We require neither Pope nor Aristotle to tell us that critics should not be pert nor prejudiced; that fancy should be regulated by judgment; that apparent facility comes by long training; that the sound should have some conformity to the meaning; that genius is often envied; and that dulness is frequently beyond the reach of reproof. We might even guess, without the authority of Pope, backed by Bacon, that there are some beauties which cannot be taught by method, but must be reached "by a kind of felicity." It is not the less interesting to notice Pope's skill in polishing these rather rusty sayings into the appearance of novelty. In a familiar line Pope gives us the view which he would himself apply in such cases.

> True wit is nature to advantage dress'd,
> What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd."

The only fair question, in short, is whether Pope has managed to give a lasting form to some of the floating commonplaces which have more or less suggested themselves to every writer. If we apply this test, we must admit that if the essay upon criticism does not show deep thought, it shows singular skill in putting old truths. Pope undeniably succeeded in hitting off many phrases of marked felicity. He already showed the power, in which he was probably unequalled, of coining aphorisms out of commonplace. Few people read the essay now, but everybody is aware that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread," and has heard the warning—

> A little learning is a dangerous thing,
> rink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:"

maxims which may not commend themselves as strictly accurate to a scientific reasoner, but which have as much truth as one can demand from an epigram. And besides many sayings which share in some degree their merit, there are occasional passages which rise, at least, to the height of graceful rhetoric if they are scarcely to be called poetical. One simile was long famous, and was called by Johnson the best in the language. It is that in which the sanguine youth, overwhelmed by a growing perception of the boundlessness of possible attainments, is compared to the traveller crossing the mountains and seeing—

> Hills peep o'er hills and Alps on Alps arise."

The poor simile is pretty well forgotten, but is really a good specimen of Pope's brilliant declamation.

The essay, however, is not uniformly polished. Between the happier passages we have to cross stretches of flat prose twisted into rhyme; Pope seems to have intentionally pitched his style at a prosaic level as fitter for didactic purposes; but besides this we here and there come upon phrases which are not only elliptical and slovenly, but defy all grammatical construction. This was a blemish to which Pope was always strangely liable. It was perhaps due in part to over-correction, when the context was forgotten and the subject had lost its freshness. Critics, again, have remarked upon the poverty of the rhymes, and observed that he makes ten rhymes to "wit" and twelve to "sense." The frequent recurrence of the words is the more awkward because they are curiously ambiguous. "Wit" was beginning to receive its modern meaning; but Pope uses it vaguely as sometimes equivalent to intelligence in general, sometimes to the poetic faculty, and sometimes to the erratic fancy, which the true poet restrains by sense. Pope would have been still more puzzled if asked to define precisely what he meant by the antithesis between nature and art. They are somehow opposed, yet art turns out to be only "nature methodised." We have, indeed, a clue for our guidance; to study nature, we are told, is the same thing as to study Homer, and Homer should be read day and night, with Virgil for a comment and Aristotle for an expositor. Nature, good sense, Homer, Virgil, and the Stagyrite all, it seems, come to much the same thing.

It would be very easy to pick holes in this very loose theory. But it is better to try to understand the point of view indicated; for, in truth, Pope is really stating the assumptions which guided his whole career. No one will accept his position at the present time; but any one who is incapable of, at least, a provisional sympathy, may as well throw Pope aside at once, and with Pope most contemporary literature.

The dominant figure in Pope's day was the Wit. The wit—taken personally—was the man who represented what we now describe by culture or the spirit of the age. Bright, clear common sense was for once having its own way, and tyrannising over the faculties from which it too often suffers violence. The favoured faculty never doubted its own qualification for supremacy in every department. In metaphysics it was triumphing with Hobbes and Locke over the remnants of scholasticism; under Tillotson, it was expelling mystery from religion; and in art it was declaring war against the extravagant, the romantic, the mystic, and the Gothic—a word then used as a simple term of abuse. Wit and sense are but different avatars of the same spirit; wit was the form in which it showed itself in coffee-houses, and sense that in which it appeared in the pulpit or parliament. When Walsh told Pope to be correct, he was virtually advising him to carry the same spirit into poetry. The classicism of the time was the natural corollary; for the classical models were the historical symbols of the movement

which Pope represented. He states his view very tersely in the essay. Classical culture had been overwhelmed by the barbarians, and the monks "finished what the Goths began." Letters revived when the study of classical models again gave an impulse and supplied a guidance.

> "At length Erasmus, that great injured name,
> The glory of the priesthood and their shame,
> Stemm'd the wild torrent of a barbarous age,
> And drove these holy Vandals off the stage."

The classicalism of Pope's time was no doubt very different from that of the period of Erasmus; but in his view it differed only because the contemporaries of Dryden had more thoroughly dispersed the mists of the barbarism which still obscured the Shakspearean age, and from which even Milton or Cowley had not completely escaped. Dryden and Boileau and the French critics, with their interpreters, Roscommon, Sheffield, and Walsh, who found rules in Aristotle, and drew their precedents from Homer, were at last stating the pure canons of unadulterated sense. To this school wit, sense, and nature, and the classics, all meant pretty much the same. That was pronounced to be unnatural which was too silly, or too far-fetched, or too exalted, to approve itself to the good sense of a wit; and the very incarnation and eternal type of good sense and nature was to be found in the classics. The test of thorough polish and refinement was the power of ornamenting a speech with an appropriate phrase from Horace or Virgil, or prefixing a Greek motto to an essay in the *Spectator*. If it was necessary to give to any utterance an air of philosophical authority, a reference to Longinus or Aristotle was the natural device. Perhaps the acquaintance with classics might not be very profound; but the classics supplied at least a convenient symbol for the spirit which had triumphed against Gothic barbarism and scholastic pedantry.

Even the priggish wits of that day were capable of being bored by didactic poetry, and especially by such didactic poetry as resolved itself too easily into a string of maxims not more poetical in substance than the immortal "'Tis a sin to steal a pin." The essay—published anonymously—did not make any rapid success till Pope sent round copies to well-known critics. Addison s praise and Dennis's abuse helped, as we shall presently see, to give it notoriety. Pope, however, returned from criticism to poetry, and his next performance was in some degree a fresh, but far less puerile, performance upon the pastoral pipe.* Nothing could be more natural than for the young poet to take for a text the forest in which he lived. Dull as the natives might be, their dwelling-place was historical, and there was an excellent precedent for such a performance. Pope, as we have seen, was familiar with Milton's

* There is the usual contradiction as to the date of composition of *Windsor Forest*. Part seems to have been written early (Pope says 1704), and part certainly not before 1712.

juvenile poems; but such works as the Allegro and Penseroso were too full of the genuine country spirit to suit his probable audience. Wycherley, whom he frequently invited to come to Binfield, would undoubtedly have found Milton a bore. But Sir John Denham, a thoroughly masculine, if not, as Pope calls him, a majestic poet, was a guide whom the Wycherleys would respect. His *Cooper's Hill* (in 1642) was the first example of what Johnson calls local poetry —poetry, that is, devoted to the celebration of a particular place; and, moreover, it was one of the early models of the rhythm which became triumphant in the hands of Dryden. One couplet is still familiar:

> "Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
> Strong without rage; without o'erflowing, full."

The poem has some vigorous descriptive touches, but is in the main a forcible expression of the moral and political reflections which would be approved by the admirers of good sense in poetry.

Pope's *Windsor Forest*, which appeared in the beginning of 1713, is closely and avowedly modelled upon this original. There is still a considerable infusion of the puerile classicism of the Pastorals, which contrasts awkwardly with Denham's strength, and a silly episode about the nymph Lodona changed into the river Loddon by Diana, to save her from the pursuit of Pan. But the style is animated, and the descriptions, though seldom original, show Pope's frequent felicity of language. Wordsworth, indeed, was pleased to say that Pope had here introduced almost the only "new images of internal nature" to be found between Milton and Thomson. Probably the good Wordsworth was wishing to do a little bit of excessive candour. Pope will not introduce his scenery without a turn suited to the taste of the town:—

> "Here waving groves a chequer'd scene display,
> And part admit and part exclude the day;
> As some coy nymph her lover's fond address,
> Nor quite indulges nor can quite repress."

He has some well-turned lines upon the sports of the forest, though they are clearly not the lines of a sportsman. They betray something of the sensitive lad's shrinking from the rough squires whose only literature consisted of Durfey's songs, and who would have heartily laughed at his sympathy for a dying pheasant. I may observe in passing that Pope always showed the true poet's tenderness for the lower animals, and disgust at bloodshed. He loved his dog, and said that he would have inscribed over his grave, "O rare Bounce," but for the appearance of ridiculing "rare Ben Johnson." He spoke with horror of a contemporary dissector of live dogs, and the pleasantest of his papers in the *Guardian* is a warm remonstrance against cruelty to animals. He "dares not" attack hunting, he says—and, indeed, such an attack requires some courage even at the present day—but he evidently has no sympa-

thy with huntsmen, and has to borrow his description from Statius, which was hardly the way to get the true local colour. *Windsor Forest*, however, like *Cooper's Hill*, speedily diverges into historical and political reflections. The barbarity of the old forest laws, the poets Denham and Cowley and Surrey, who had sung on the banks of the Thames, and the heroes who made Windsor illustrious suggest obvious thoughts, put into verses often brilliant, though sometimes affected, varied by a compliment to Trumbull and an excessive eulogy of Granville, to whom the poem is inscribed. The whole is skilfully adapted to the time by a brilliant eulogy upon the peace which was concluded just as the poem was published. The Whig poet Tickell, soon to be Pope's rival, was celebrating the same "lofty theme" on his "artless reed," and introducing a pretty little compliment to Pope. To readers who have lost the taste for poetry of this class one poem may seem about as good as the other; but Pope's superiority is plain enough to a reader who will condescend to distinguish. His verses are an excellent specimen of his declamatory style—polished, epigrammatic, and well expressed; and though keeping far below the regions of true poetry, preserving just that level which would commend them to the literary statesmen and the politicians at Will's and Button's. Perhaps some advocate of Free Trade might try upon a modern audience the lines in which Pope expresses his aspiration in a foot-note that London may one day become a "FREE PORT." There is at least not one antiquated or obscure phrase in the whole. Here are half a dozen lines:—

> "The time shall come, when, free as seas and wind,
> Unbounded Thames shall flow for all mankind,
> Whole nations enter with each swelling tide,
> And seas but join the regions they divide;
> Earth's distant ends our glory shall behold,
> And the new world launch forth to seek the old."

In the next few years Pope found other themes for the display of his declamatory powers. Of the *Temple of Fame* (1715), a frigid imitation of Chaucer, I indeed only say that it is one of Pope's least successful performances: but I must notice more fully two rhetorical poems which appeared in 1717. These were the *Elegy to the Memory of an unfortunate Lady* and the *Eloisa to Abelard*. Both poems, and especially the last, have received the warmest praises from Pope's critics, aud even from critics who were most opposed to his school. They are, in fact, his chief performances of the sentimental kind. Written in his youth, and yet when his powers of versification had reached their fullest maturity, they represent an element generally absent from his poetry. Pope was at the period in which, if ever, a poet should sing of love, and in which we expect the richest glow and fervour of youthful imagination. Pope was neither a Burns, nor a Byron, nor a Keats; but here, if anywhere, we should find those qualities in which he has most affinity to the poets of passion or of sensuous

emotion, not soured by experience or purified by reflection. The motives of the two poems were skilfully chosen. Pope—as has already appeared to some extent—was rarely original in his designs; he liked to have the outlines at least drawn for him, to be filled with his own colouring. The *Eloisa to Abelard* was founded upon a translation from the French, published in 1714 by Hughes (author of the *Siege of Damascus*), which is itself a manipulated translation from the famous Latin originals. Pope, it appears, kept very closely to the words of the English translation, and in some places has done little more than versify the prose, though, of course, it is compressed, rearranged, and modified. The *Unfortunate Lady* has been the cause of a good deal of controversy. Pope's elegy implies, vaguely enough, that she had been cruelly treated by her guardians, and had committed suicide in some foreign country. The verses, as commentators decided, showed such genuine feeling, that the story narrated in them must have been authentic, and one of his own correspondents (Caryll) begged him for an explanation of the facts. Pope gave no answer, but left a posthumous note to an edition of his letters calculated, perhaps intended, to mystify future inquirers. The lady, a Mrs. Weston, to whom the note pointed, did not die till 1724, and could therefore not have committed suicide in 1717. The mystification was childish enough, though, if Pope had committed no worse crime of the kind, one would not consider him to be a very grievous offender. The inquiries of Mr. Dilke, who cleared up this puzzle, show that there were, in fact, two ladies—Mrs. Weston and a Mrs. Cope—known to Pope about this time, both of whom suffered under some domestic persecution. Pope seems to have taken up their cause with energy, and sent money to Mrs. Cope when, at a later period, she was dying abroad in great distress. His zeal seems to have been sincere and generous, and it is possible enough that the elegy was a reflection of his feelings, though it suggested an imaginary state of facts. If this be so, the reference to the lady in his posthumous note contained some relation to the truth, though if taken too literally it would be misleading.

The poems themselves are, beyond all doubt, impressive compositions. They are vivid and admirably worked. "Here," says Johnson of the *Eloisa to Abelard*, the most important of the two, "is particularly observable the *curiosa felicitas*, a fruitful soil and careful cultivation. Here is no crudeness of sense, nor asperity of language." So far there can be no dispute. The style has the highest degree of technical perfection, and it is generally added that the poems are as pathetic as they are exquisitely written. Bowles, no hearty lover of Pope, declared the *Eloisa* to be "infinitely superior to everything of the kind, ancient or modern." The tears shed, says Hazlitt of the same poem, "are drops gushing from the heart; the words are burning sighs breathed from the soul of love." And De Quincey ends an eloquent criticism by declaring that the "lyrical tumult of the changes, the hope, the

tears, the rapture, the penitence, the despair, place the reader is tumultuous sympathy with the poor distracted nun." The pathon of the *Unfortunate Lady* has been almost equally praised, and I may quote from it a famous passage which Mackintosh repeated with emotion to repel a charge of coldness brought against Pope :—

> "By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed,
> By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed,
> By foreign hands thy humble grave adorn'd,
> By strangers honour'd and by strangers mourn'd!
> What though no friends in sable weeds appear,
> Grieve for an hour, perhaps, then mourn a year,
> And bear about the mockery of woe
> To midnight dances and the public show?
> What though no weeping loves thy ashes grace,
> Nor polish'd marble emulate thy face?
> What though no sacred earth allow thee room,
> Nor hallow'd dirge be mutter'd o'er thy tomb?
> Yet shall thy grave with rising flowers be dress'd,
> And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast;
> There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,
> There the first roses of the year shall blow;
> While angels with their silver wings o'ershade
> The ground, now sacred by thy reliques made."

The more elaborate poetry of the *Eloisa* is equally polished throughout, and too much praise cannot easily be bestowed upon the skill with which the romantic scenery of the convent is indicated in the background, and the force with which Pope has given the revulsions of feeling of his unfortunate heroine from earthly to heavenly love, and from keen remorse to renewed gusts of overpowering passion. All this may be said, and without opposing high critical authority. And yet, I must also say, whether with or without authority, that I, at least, can read the poems without the least "disposition to cry," and that a single pathetic touch of Cowper or Wordsworth strikes incomparably deeper. And if I seek for a reason, it seems to be simply that Pope never crosses the undefinable, but yet ineffaceable, line which separates true poetry from rhetoric. The *Eloisa* ends rather flatly by one of Pope's characteristic aphorisms. "He best can paint them (the woes, that is, of Eloisa) who shall feel them most;" and it is characteristic, by the way, that even in these his most impassioned verses, the lines which one remembers are of the same epigrammatic stamp, *e. g.:*

> "A heap of dust alone remains of thee,
> 'Tis all thou art and all the proud shall be!

> "I mourn the lover, not lament the fault.

> "How happy is the blameless vestal's lot,
> The world forgetting, by the world forgot."

The worker in moral aphorisms cannot forget himself even in the full swing of his fervid declamation. I have no doubt that Pope so far exemplified his own doctrine that he truly felt whilst he was writing. His feelings make him eloquent, but they do not enable him to "snatch a grace beyond the reach of art," to blind us for a moment to the presence of the consummate workman, judiciously blending his colours, heightening his effects, and skilfully managing his transitions or consciously introducing an abrupt outburst of a new mood. The smoothness of the verses imposes monotony even upon the varying passions which are supposed to struggle in Eloisa's breast. It is not merely our knowledge that Pope is speaking dramatically which prevents us from receiving the same kind of impressions as we receive from poetry—such, for example, as some of Cowper's minor pieces—into which we know that a man is really putting his whole heart. The comparison would not be fair, for in such cases we are moved by knowledge of external facts as well as by the poetic power. But it is simply that Pope always resembles an orator whose gestures are studied, and who thinks, while he is speaking, of the fall of his robes and the attitude of his hands. He is throughout academical; and though knowing with admirable nicety how grief should be represented, and what have been the expedients of his best predecessors, he misses the one essential touch of spontaneous impulse.

One other blemish is perhaps more fatal to the popularity of the *Eloisa.* There is a taint of something unwholesome and effeminate. Pope, it is true, is only following the language of the original in the most offensive passages; but we see too plainly that he has dwelt too fondly upon those passages, and worked them up with especial care. We need not be prudish in our judgment of impassioned poetry; but when the passion has this false ring, the ethical coincides with the æsthetic objection.

I have mentioned these poems here, because they seem to be the development of the rhetorical vein which appeared in the earlier work. But I have passed over another work which has sometimes been regarded as his masterpiece. A Lord Petre had offended a Miss Fermor by stealing a lock of her hair. She thought that he showed more gallantry than courtesy, and some unpleasant feeling resulted between the families. Pope's friend, Caryll, thought that it might be appeased if the young poet would turn the whole affair into friendly ridicule. Nobody, it might well be supposed, had a more dexterous touch: and a brilliant trifle from his hands, just fitted for the atmosphere of drawing-rooms, would be a convenient peace-offering, and was the very thing in which he might be expected to succeed. Pope accordingly set to work at a dainty little mock-heroic, in which he describes, in playful mockery of the conventional style, the fatal coffee-drinking at Hampton, in which the too daring peer appropriated the lock. The poem received the praise which it well deserved; for certainly the young poet had executed his task to a nicety. No more brilliant, sparkling, vivacious trifle is to be found in our literature

than the *Rape of the Lock*, even in this early form. Pope received permission from the lady to publish it in *Lintot's Miscellany* in 1712, and a wider circle admired it, though it seems that the lady and her family began to think that young Mr. Pope was making rather too free with her name. Pope meanwhile, animated by his success, hit upon a singularly happy conception, by which he thought that the poem might be rendered more important. The solid critics of those days were much occupied with the machinery of epic poems; the machinery being composed of the gods and goddesses who, from the days of Homer, had attended to the fortunes of heroes. He had hit upon a curious French book, the *Comte de Gabalis*, which professes to reveal the mysteries of the Rosicrucians, and it occurred to him that the elemental sylphs and gnomes would serve his purpose admirably. He spoke of his new device to Addison, who administered—and there is not the slightest reason for doubting his perfect sincerity and good meaning—a little dose of cold water. The poem, as it stood, was a "delicious little thing"—*merum sal*—and it would be a pity to alter it. Pope, however, adhered to his plan, made a splendid success, and thought that Addison must have been prompted by some mean motive. The *Rape of the Lock* appeared in its new form, with sylphs and gnomes, and an ingenious account of a game at cards and other improvements, in 1714. Pope declared, and critics have agreed, that he never showed more skill than in the remodelling of this poem; and it has ever since held a kind of recognised supremacy amongst the productions of the drawing-room muse.

The reader must remember that the so-called heroic style of Pope's period is now hopelessly effete. No human being would care about machinery and the rules of Bossu, or read without utter weariness the mechanical imitations of Homer and Virgil which were occasionally attempted by the Blackmores and other less ponderous versifiers. The shadow grows dim with the substance. The burlesque loses its point when we care nothing for the original; and, so far, Pope's bit of filigree-work, as Hazlitt calls it, has become tarnished. The very mention of beaux and belles suggests the kind of feeling with which we disinter fragments of old-world finery from the depths of an ancient cabinet, and even the wit is apt to sound wearisome. And further, it must be allowed to some hostile critics that Pope has a worse defect. The poem is, in effect, a satire upon feminine frivolity. It continues the strain of mockery against hoops and patches and their wearers, which supplied Addison and his colleagues with the materials of so many *Spectators*. I think that even in Addison there is something which rather jars upon us. His persiflage is full of humour and kindliness, but underlying it there is a tone of superiority to women which is sometimes offensive. It is taken for granted that a woman is a fool, or at least should be flattered if any man condescends to talk sense to her. With Pope this tone becomes harsher, and the merciless satirist begins to show himself. In truth, Pope can be inimitably pungent, but he can never be simply

playful. Addison was too condescending with his pretty pupils; but under Pope's courtesy there lurks contempt, and his smile has a disagreeable likeness to a sneer. If Addison's manner sometimes suggests the blandness of a don who classes women with the inferior beings unworthy of the Latin grammar, Pope suggests the brilliant wit whose contempt has a keener edge from his resentment against fine ladies blinded to his genius by his personal deformity.

Even in his dedication, Pope, with unconscious impertinence, insults his heroine for her presumable ignorance of his critical jargon. His smart epigrams want but a slight change of tone to become satire. It is the same writer who begins an essay on women's characters by telling a woman that her sex is a compound of

> "Matter too soft a lasting mask to bear;
> And best distinguished by black, brown, or fair,"

and communicates to her the pleasant truth that

> "Every woman is at heart a rake."

Women, in short, are all frivolous beings, whose one genuine interest is in love-making. The same sentiment is really implied in the more playful lines in the *Rape of the Lock*. The sylphs are warned by omens that some misfortune impends; but they don't know what.

> "Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
> Or some frail china jar receive a flaw;
> Or stain her honour or her new brocade,
> Forget her prayers or miss a masquerade;
> Or lose her heart or necklace at a ball,
> Or whether heaven has doom'd that Shock must fall."

We can understand that Miss Fermor would feel such raillery to be equivocal. It may be added, that an equal want of delicacy is implied in the mock-heroic battle at the end, where the ladies are gifted with an excess of screaming power:—

> "'Restore the lock!' she cries, and all around
> 'Restore the lock,' the vaulted roofs rebound—
> Not fierce Othello in so loud a strain
> Roar'd for the handkerchief that caused his pain."

These faults, though far from trifling, are yet felt only as blemishes in the admirable beauty and brilliance of the poem. The successive scenes are given with so firm and clear a touch—there is such a sense of form, the language is such a dexterous elevation of the ordinary social twaddle into the mock-heroic, that it is impossible not to recognise a consummate artistic power. The dazzling display of true wit and fancy blinds us for the time to the want of that real tenderness and humour which would have softened some harsh passages, and given a more enduring charm to

the poetry. It has, in short, the merit that belongs to any work of art which expresses in the most finished form the sentiment characteristic of a given social phase; one deficient in many of the most ennobling influences, but yet one in which the arts of converse represent a very high development of shrewd sense refined into vivid wit. And we may, I think, admit that there is some foundation for the genealogy that traces Pope's Ariel back to his more elevated ancestor in the *Tempest*. The later Ariel, indeed, is regarded as the soul of a coquette, and is almost an allegory of the spirit of poetic fancy in slavery to polished society.

> "Gums and pomatums shall his flight restrain
> While clogg'd he beats his silken wings in vain."

Pope's Ariel is a parody of the ethereal being into whom Shakspeare had refined the ancient fairy; but it is a parody which still preserves a sense of the delicate and graceful. The ancient race, which appeared for the last time in this travesty of the fashion of Queen Anne, still showed some touch of its ancient beauty. Since that time no fairy has appeared without being hopelessly childish or affected.

Let us now turn from the poems to the author's personal career during the same period. In the remarkable autobiographic poem called the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, Pope speaks of his early patrons and friends, and adds—

> "Soft were my numbers; who could take offence
> When pure description held the place of sense?
> Like gentle Fanny's was my flow'ry theme,
> A painted mistress or a purling stream.
> Yet then did Gildon draw his venal quill—
> I wish'd the man a dinner, and sat still.
> Yet then did Dennis rave in furious fret;
> I never answer'd,—I was not in debt."

Pope's view of his own career suggests the curious problem, how it came to pass that so harmless a man should be the butt of so many hostilities? How could any man be angry with a writer of gentle pastorals and versified love-letters? The answer of Pope was, that this was the normal state of things. "The life of a wit," he says, in the preface to his works, "is a warfare upon earth;" and the warfare results from the hatred of men of genius natural to the dull. Had any one else made such a statement, Pope would have seen its resemblance to the complaint of the one reasonable juryman overpowered by eleven obstinate fellows. But we may admit that an intensely sensitive nature is a bad qualification for a public career. A man who ventures into the throng of competitors without a skin will be tortured by every touch, and suffer the more if he turns to retaliate.

Pope's first literary performances had not been so harmless as he suggests. Amongst the minor men of letters of the day was

the surly John Dennis. He was some thirty years Pope's senior; a writer of dreary tragedies which had gained a certain success by their Whiggish tendencies, and of ponderous disquisitions upon critical questions, not much cruder in substance though heavier in form than many utterances of Addison or Steele. He could, however, snarl out some shrewd things when provoked, and was known to the most famous wits of the day. He had corresponded with Dryden, Congreve, and Wycherley, and published some of their letters. Pope, it seems, had been introduced to him by Cromwell, but they had met only two or three times. When Pope had become ashamed of following Wycherley about like a dog, he would soon find out that a Dennis did not deserve the homage of a rising genius. Possibly Dennis had said something of Pope's Pastorals, and Pope had probably been a witness, perhaps more than a mere witness, to some passage of arms in which Dennis lost his temper. In mere youthful impertinence he introduced an offensive touch in the *Essay upon Criticism*. It would be well, he said, if critics could advise authors freely,—

> "But Appius reddens at each word you speak,
> And stares, tremendous, with a threatening eye,
> Like some fierce tyrant at old tapestry."

The name Appius referred to Dennis's tragedy of *Appius and Virginia*, a piece now recollected solely by the fact that poor Dennis had invented some new thunder for the performance; and by his piteous complaint against the actors for afterwards "stealing his thunder," had started a proverbial expression. Pope's reference stung Dennis to the quick. He replied by a savage pamphlet, pulling Pope's essay to pieces, and hitting some real blots, but diverging into the coarsest personal abuse. Not content with saying in his preface that he was attacked with the utmost falsehood and calumny by a little affected hypocrite, who had nothing in his mouth but truth, candour, and good nature, he reviled Pope for his personal defects; insinuated that he was a hunch-backed toad; declared that he was the very shape of the bow of the god of love; that he might be thankful that he was born a modern, for, had he been born of Greek parents, his life would have been no longer than that of one of his poems, namely, half a day; and that his outward form, however like a monkey's, could not deviate more from the average of humanity than his mind. These amenities gave Pope his first taste of good, savage, slashing abuse. The revenge was out of all proportion to the offence. Pope, at first, seemed to take the assault judiciously. He kept silence, and simply marked some of the faults exposed by Dennis for alteration. But the wound rankled, and when an opportunity presently offered itself, Pope struck savagely at his enemy. To show how this came to pass, I must rise from poor old Dennis to a more exalted literary sphere.

The literary world, in which Dryden had recently been, and Pope was soon to be, the most conspicuous figure, was for the

present under the mild dictatorship of Addison. We know Addison as one of the most kindly and delicate humourists, and we can perceive the gentleness which made him one of the most charming of companions in a small society. His sense of the ludicrous saved him from the disagreeable ostentation of powers which were never applied to express bitterness of feeling or to edge angry satire. The reserve of his sensitive nature made access difficult, but he was so transparently modest and unassuming that his shyness was not, as is too often the case, mistaken for pride. It is easy to understand the posthumous affection which Macaulay has so eloquently expressed, and the contemporary popularity which, according to Swift, would have made people unwilling to refuse him had he asked to be king. And yet I think that one cannot read Addison's praises without a certain recalcitration, like that which one feels in the case of the model boy who wins all the prizes, including that for good conduct. It is hard to feel very enthusiastic about a virtue whose dictates coincide so precisely with the demands of decorum, and which leads by so easy a path to reputation and success. Popularity is more often significant of the tact which makes a man avoid giving offence, than of the warm impulses of a generous nature. A good man who mixes with the world ought to be hated, if not to hate. But, whatever we may say against his excessive goodness, Addison deserved and received universal esteem, which in some cases became enthusiastic. Foremost amongst his admirers was the warm-hearted, reckless, impetuous Steele, the typical Irishman ; and amongst other members of his little senate —as Pope called it—were Ambrose Philips and Tickell, young men of letters and sound Whig politics, and more or less competitors of Pope in literature. When Pope was first becoming known in London the Whigs were out of power; Addison and his friends were generally to be found at Button's Coffee-house in the afternoon, and were represented to the society of the time by the *Spectator*, which began in March, 1711, and appeared daily to the end of 1712. Naturally, the young Pope would be anxious to approach this famous clique, though his connexions lay, in the first instance, amongst the Jacobite and Catholic families. Steele, too, would be glad to welcome so promising a contributor to the *Spectator* and its successor, the *Guardian*.

Pope, we may therefore believe, was heartily delighted when, some months after Dennis's attack, a notice of his *Essay upon Criticism* appeared in the *Spectator*, December 20, 1711. The reviewer censured some attacks upon contemporaries—a reference obviously to the lines upon Dennis—which the author had admitted into his "very fine poem;" but there were compliments enough to overbalance this slight reproof. Pope wrote a letter of acknowledgment to Steele, overflowing with the sincerest gratitude of a young poet on his first recognition by a high authority. Steele, in reply, disclaimed the article, and promised to introduce Pope to its real author, the great Addison himself. It does not seem that the acquaintance thus opened with the Addisonians ripened very

rapidly, or led to any considerable results. Pope, indeed, is said to have written some *Spectators*. He certainly sent to Steele his *Messiah*, a sacred eclogue in imitation of Virgil's *Pollio*. It appeared on May 14, 1712, and is one of Pope's dexterous pieces of workmanship, in which phrases from Isaiah are so strung together as to form a good imitation of the famous poem which was once supposed to entitle Virgil to some place among the inspired heralds of Christianity. Pope sent another letter or two to Steele, which look very much like intended contributions to the *Spectator*, and a short letter about Hadrian's verses to his soul, which appeared in November, 1712. When, in 1713, the *Guardian* succeeded the *Spectator*, Pope was one of Steele's contributors, and a paper by him upon dedications appeared as the fourth number. He soon gave a more remarkable proof of his friendly relations with Addison.

It is probable that no first performance of a play upon the English stage ever excited so much interest as that of Addison's Cato. It was not only the work of the first man of letters of the day, but it had, or was taken to have, a certain political significance. "The time was come," says Johnson, "when those who affected to think liberty in danger, affected likewise to think that a stage-play might preserve it." Addison, after exhibiting more than the usual display of reluctance, prepared his play for representation, and it was undoubtedly taken to be in some sense a Whig manifesto. It was, therefore, remarkable that he should have applied to Pope for a prologue, though Pope's connexions were entirely of the anti-Whiggish kind, and a passage in *Windsor Forest*, his last new poem (it appeared in March, 1713), indicated pretty plainly a refusal to accept the Whig shibboleths. In the *Forest* he was enthusiastic for the peace, and sneered at the Revolution. Pope afterwards declared that Addison had disavowed all party intentions at the time, and he accused him of insincerity for afterwards taking credit (in a poetical dedication of *Cato*) for the services rendered by his play to the cause of liberty. Pope's assertion is worthless in any case where he could exalt his own character for consistency at another man's expense, but it is true that both parties were inclined to equivocate. Is is, indeed, difficult to understand how, if any "stage-play could preserve liberty," such a play as *Cato* should do the work. The polished declamation is made up of the platitudes common to Whigs and Tories; and Bolingbroke gave the cue to his own party when he presented fifty guineas to *Cato's* representatives for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. The Whigs, said Pope, design a second present when they can contrive as good a saying. Bolingbroke was, of course, aiming at Marlborough, and his interpretation was intrinsically as plausible as any that could have been devised by his antagonist. Each side could adopt *Cato* as easily as rival sects can quote the Bible; and it seems possible that Addison may have suggested to Pope that nothing in *Cato* could really offend his principles. Addison, as Pope also tells us, thought the

prologue ambiguous, and altered " Britons, *arise!* " to " Britons, *attend!* " lest the phrase should be thought to hint at a new revolution. Addison advised Pope about this time not to be content with the applause of " half the nation," and perhaps regarded him as one who, by the fact of his external position with regard to parties, would be a more appropriate sponsor for the play.

Whatever the intrinsic significance of *Cato*, circumstances gave it a political colour; and Pope, in a lively description of the first triumphant night to his friend Caryll, says, that as author of the successful and very spirited prologue, he was clapped into a Whig, sorely against his will, at every two lines. Shortly before, he had spoken in the warmest terms to the same correspondent of the admirable moral tendency of the work; and perhaps he had not realised the full party significance till he became conscious of the impression produced upon the audience. Not long afterwards (letter of June 12, 1713) we find him complaining that his connexion with Steele and the *Guardian* was giving offence to some honest Jacobites. Had they known the nature of the connexion, they need hardly have grudged Steele his contributor. His next proceedings possibly suggested the piece of advice which Addison gave to Lady M. W. Montagu: " Leave Pope as soon as you can; he will certainly play you some devilish trick else."

His first trick was calculated to vex an editor's soul. Ambrose Philips, as I have said, had published certain pastorals in the same volume with Pope's. Philips, though he seems to have been less rewarded than most of his companions, was certainly accepted as an attached member of Addison's "little senate;" and that body was not more free than other mutual admiration societies from the desire to impose its own prejudices upon the public. When Philips's *Distressed Mother*, a close imitation of Racine's *Andromaque*, was preparing for the stage, the Spectator was taken by Will Honeycomb to a rehearsal (*Spectator*, January 31, 1712), and Sir Roger de Coverley himself attended one of the performances (*Ib.*, March 25), and was profoundly affected by its pathos. The last paper was of course by Addison, and is a real triumph of art as a most delicate application of humour to the slightly unworthy purpose of puffing a friend and disciple. Addison had again praised Philips's Pastorals in the *Spectator* (October 30, 1712); and amongst the early numbers of the *Guardian* were a short series of papers upon pastoral poetry, in which the fortunate Ambrose was again held up as a model, whilst no notice was taken of Pope's rival performance. Pope, one may believe, had a contempt for Philips, whose pastoral inanities, whether better or worse than his own, had not the excuse of being youthful productions. Philips has bequeathed to our language the phrase " Namby-pamby," imposed upon him by Henry Carey (author of *Sally in our Alley*, and the clever farce *Chrononhotonthologos*), and years after this he wrote a poem to Miss Pulteney in the nursery, beginning,—

" Dimply damsel, sweetly smiling,"

which may sufficiently interpret the meaning of his nickname. Pope's irritable vanity was vexed at the liberal praises bestowed on such a rival, and he revenged himself by an artifice more ingenious than scrupulous. He sent an anonymous article to Steele for the *Guardian.* It is a professed continuation of the previous papers on pastorals, and is ostensibly intended to remove the appearance of partiality arising from the omission of Pope's name. In the first paragraphs the design is sufficiently concealed to mislead an unwary reader into the belief that Philips is preferred to Pope; but the irony soon becomes transparent, and Philips's antiquated affectation is contrasted with the polish of Pope, who is said even to "deviate into downright poetry." Steele, it is said, was so far mystified as to ask Pope's permission to publish the criticism. Pope generously permitted, and, accordingly, Steele printed what he must soon have discovered to be a shrewd attack upon his old friend and ally. Some writers have found a difficulty in understanding how Steele could have so blundered. One might, perhaps, whisper in confidence to the discreet, that even editors are mortal, and that Steele was conceivably capable of the enormity of reading papers carelessly. Philips was furious, and hung up a birch in Button's Coffee-house, declaring that he would apply it to his tormentor should he ever show his nose in the room. As Philips was celebrated for skill with the sword, the mode of vengeance was certainly unmanly, and stung the soul of his adversary, always morbidly sensitive to all attacks, and especially to attacks upon his person. The hatred thus kindled was never quenched, and breathes in some of Pope's bitterest lines.

If not a "devilish trick," this little performance was enough to make Pope's relations to the Addison set decidedly unpleasant. Addison is said (but the story is very improbable) to have enjoyed the joke. If so, a vexatious incident must have changed his view of Pope's pleasantries, though Pope professedly appeared as his defender. Poor old Thersites-Dennis published, during the summer, a very bitter attack upon Addison's *Cato.* He said afterwards—though, considering the relations of the men, some misunderstanding is probable—that Pope had indirectly instigated this attack through the bookseller, Lintot. If so, Pope must have deliberately contrived the trap for the unlucky Dennis; and, at any rate, he fell upon Dennis as soon as the trap was sprung. Though Dennis was a hot-headed Whig, he had quarrelled with Addison and Steele, and was probably jealous, as the author of tragedies intended, like *Cato*, to propagate Whig principles, perhaps to turn Whig prejudices to account. He writes with the bitterness of a disappointed and unlucky man, but he makes some very fair points against his enemy. Pope's retaliation took the form of an anonymous "Narrative of the Frenzy of John Dennis." * It is written in that style of coarse personal satire of which Swift was a master, but

* Mr. Dilke, it is perhaps right to say, has given some reasons for doubting Pope's authorship of this squib; but the authenticity seems to be established, and Mr. Dilke himself hesitates.

for which Pope was very ill fitted. All his neatness of style seems to desert him when he tries this tone, and nothing is left but a brutal explosion of contemptuous hatred. Dennis is described in his garret, pouring forth insane ravings prompted by his disgust at the success of *Cato;* but not a word is said in reply to Dennis's criticisms. It was plain enough that the author, whoever he might be, was more anxious to satisfy a grudge against Dennis than to defend Dennis's victim. It is not much of a compliment to Addison to say that he had enough good feeling to scorn such a mode of retaliation, and perspicuity enough to see that it would be little to his credit. Accordingly in his majestic way, he caused Steele to write a note to Lintot (August 4, 1713), disavowing all complicity, and saying that if even he noticed Mr. Dennis's criticisms, it should be in such a way as to give Mr. Dennis no cause of complaint. He added that he had refused to see the pamphlet when it was offered for his inspection, and had expressed his disapproval of such a mode of attack. Nothing could be more becoming; and it does not appear that Addison knew, when writing this note, that Pope was the author of the anonymous assault. If, as the biographers say, Addison's action was not kindly to Pope, it was bare justice to poor Dennis. Pope undoubtedly must have been bitterly vexed at the implied rebuff, and not the less because it was perfectly just. He seems always to have regarded men of Dennis's type as outside the pale of humanity. Their abuse stung him as keenly as if they had been entitled to speak with authority, and yet he retorted it as though they were not entitled to common decency. He would, to all appearance, have regarded an appeal for mercy to a Grub-street author much as Dandie Dinmont regarded Brown's tenderness to a "brock"—as a proof of incredible imbecility, or, rather, of want of proper antipathy to vermin. Dennis, like Philips, was inscribed on the long list of his hatreds; and was pursued almost to the end of his unfortunate life. Pope, it is true, took great credit to himself for helping his miserable enemy when dying in distress, and wrote a prologue to a play acted for his benefit. Yet even this prologue is a sneer, and one is glad to think that Dennis was past understanding it. We hardly know whether to pity or to condemn the unfortunate poet, whose unworthy hatreds made him suffer far worse torments than those which he could inflict upon their objects.

By this time we may suppose that Pope must have been regarded with anything but favour in the Addison circle; and, in fact, he was passing into the opposite camp, and forming a friendship with Swift and Swift's patrons. No open rupture followed with Addison for the present; but a quarrel was approaching which is, perhaps, the most celebrated in our literary history. Unfortunately, the more closely we look, the more difficult it becomes to give any definite account of it. The statements upon which accounts have been based have been chiefly those of Pope himself; and these involve inconsistencies and demonstrably inaccurate statements. Pope was anxious in later life to show that he

had enjoyed the friendship of a man so generally beloved, and was equally anxious to show that he had behaved generously and been treated with injustice and, indeed, with downright treachery. And yet, after reading the various statements made by the original authorities, one begins to doubt whether there was any real quarrel at all; or rather, if one may say so, whether it was not a quarrel upon one side.

It is, indeed, plain that a coolness had sprung up between Pope and Addison. Considering Pope's offences against the senate, his ridicule of Philips, his imposition of that ridicule upon Steele, and his indefensible use of Addison's fame as a stalking-horse in the attack upon Dennis, it is not surprising that he should have been kept at arm's length. If the rod suspended by Philips at Button's be authentic (as seems probable), the talk about Pope, in the shadow of such an ornament, is easily imaginable. Some attempts seem to have been made at a reconciliation. Jervas, Pope's teacher in painting—a bad artist, but a kindly man—tells Pope on August 20, 1714, of a conversation with Addison. It would have been worth while, he says, for Pope to have been hidden behind a wainscot or a half-length picture to have heard it. Addison expressed a wish for friendly relations, was glad that Pope had not been "carried too far among the enemy" by Swift, and hoped to be of use to him at Court—for Queen Anne died on August 1st; the wheel had turned; and the Whigs were once more the distributors of patronage. Pope's answer to Jervas is in the dignified tone; he attributes Addison's coolness to the ill offices of Philips, and is ready to be on friendly terms whenever Addison recognises his true character and independence of party. Another letter follows, as addressed by Pope to Addison himself; but here, alas! if not in the preceding letters, we are upon doubtful ground. In fact, it is impossible to doubt that the letter has been manipulated after Pope's fashion, if not actually fabricated. It is so dignified as to be insulting. It is like a box on the ear administered by a pedagogue to a repentant but not quite pardoned pupil. Pope has heard (from Jervas, it is implied) of Addison's profession; he is glad to hope that the effect of some "late malevolences" is disappearing; he will not believe (that is, he is strongly inclined to believe) that the author of *Cato* could mean one thing and say another; he will show Addison his first two books of Homer as a proof of this confidence, and hopes that it will not be abused; he challenges Addison to point out the ill nature in the *Essay upon Criticism*; and winds up by making an utterly irrelevant charge (as a proof, he says, of his own sincerity) of plagiarism against one of Addison's *Spectators*. Had such a letter been actually sent as it now stands, Addison's good nature could have scarcely held out. As it is, we can only assume that during 1714 Pope was on such terms with the clique at Button's, that a quarrel would be a natural result. According to the ordinary account the occasion presented itself in the next year.

A translation of the first Iliad by Tickell appeared (in June,

1715) simultaneously with Pope's first volume. Pope had no right to complain. No man could be supposed to have a monopoly in the translation of Homer. Tickell had the same right to try his hand as Pope; and Pope fully understood this himself. He described to Spence a conversation in which Addison told him of Tickell's intended work. Pope replied that Tickell was perfectly justified. Addison having looked over Tickell's translation of the first book, said that he would prefer not to see Pope's, as it might suggest double dealing; but consented to read Pope's second book, and praised it warmly. In all this, by Pope's own showing, Addison seems to have been scrupulously fair; and if he and the little senate preferred Tickell's work on its first appearance, they had a full right to their opinion, and Pope triumphed easily enough to pardon them. "He was meditating a criticism upon Tickell," says Johnson, "when his adversary sank before him without a blow." Pope's performance was universally preferred, and even Tickell himself yielded by anticipation. He said, in a short preface, that he had abandoned a plan of translating the whole Iliad on finding that a much abler hand had undertaken the work, and that he only published this specimen to bespeak favour for a translation of the Odyssey. It was, say Pope's apologists, an awkward circumstance that Tickell should publish at the same time as Pope, and that is about all that they can say. It was, we may reply in Stephenson's phrase, very awkward—for Tickell. In all this, in fact, it seems impossible for any reasonable man to discover anything of which Pope had the slightest ground of complaint; but his amazingly irritable nature was not to be calmed by reason. The bare fact that a translation of Homer appeared contemporaneously with his own, and that it came from one of Addison's court, made him furious. He brooded over it, suspected some dark conspiracy against his fame, and gradually mistook his morbid fancies for solid inference. He thought that Tickell had been put up by Addison as his rival, and gradually worked himself into the further belief that Addison himself had actually written the translation which passed under Tickell's name. It does not appear, so far as I know, when or how this suspicion became current. Some time after Addison's death, in 1719, a quarrel took place between Tickell, his literary executor, and Steele. Tickell seemed to insinuate that Steele had not sufficiently acknowledged his obligations to Addison, and Steele, in an angry retort, called Tickell the "reputed translator" of the first Iliad, and challenged him to translate another book successfully. The innuendo shows that Steele, who certainly had some means of knowing, was willing to suppose that Tickell had been helped by Addison. The manuscript of Tickell's work, which has been preserved, is said to prove this to be an error, and in any case there is no real ground for supposing that Addison did anything more than he admittedly told Pope, that is, read Tickell's manuscript and suggest corrections.

To argue seriously about other so-called proofs would be waste of time. They prove nothing except Pope's extreme anxiety to

justify his wild hypothesis of a dark conspiracy. Pope was jealous, spiteful, and credulous. He was driven to fury by Tickell's publication, which had the appearance of a competition. But angry as he was, he could find no real cause of complaint, except by imagining a fictitious conspiracy; and this complaint was never publicly uttered till long after Addison's death. Addison knew, no doubt, of Pope's wrath, but probably cared little for it, except to keep himself clear of so dangerous a companion. He seems to have remained on terms of civility with his antagonist, and no one would have been more surprised than he to hear of the quarrel, upon which so much controversy has been expended.

The whole affair, so far as Addison's character is concerned, thus appears to be a gigantic mare's nest. There is no proof, or even the slightest presumption, that Addison's friends ever injured Pope thought it is clear that they did not love him. It would have been marvellous if they had. Pope's suspicions are a proof that in this case he was almost subject to the illusion characteristic of actual insanity. The belief that a man is persecuted by hidden conspirators is one of the common symptoms in such cases; and Pope would seem to have been almost in the initial stage of mental disease. His madness, indeed, was not such as would lead us to call him morally irresponsible, nor was it the kind of madness which is to be found in a good many people who well deserve criminal prosecution; but it was a state of mind so morbid as to justify some compassion for the unhappy offender.

One result besides the illustration of Pope's character remains to be noticed. According to Pope's assertion it was a communication from Lord Warwick which led him to write his celebrated copy of verses upon Addison. Warwick (afterwards Addison's step-son) accused Addison of paying Gildon for a gross libel upon Pope. Pope wrote to Addison, he says, the next day. He said in this letter that he knew of Addison's behaviour—and that, unwilling to take a revenge of the same kind, he would rather tell Addison fairly of his faults in plain words. If he had to take such a step, it would be in some such way as followed, and he subjoined the first sketch of the famous lines. Addison, says Pope, used him very civilly ever afterwards. Indeed, if the account be true, Addison showed his Christian spirit by paying a compliment in one of his *Freeholders* (May 17, 1716) to Pope's Homer.

Macaulay, taking the story for granted, praises Addison's magnanimity, which, I must confess, I should be hardly Christian enough to admire. It was, however, asserted at the time that Pope had not written the verses which have made the quarrel memorable till after Addison's death. They were not published till 1723, and are not mentioned by any independent authority till 1722, though Pope afterwards appealed to Burlington as a witness to their earlier composition. The fact seems to be confirmed by the evidence of Lady M. W. Montagu, but it does not follow that Addison ever saw the verses. He knew that Pope disliked him; but he probably did not suspect the extent of the hostility. Pope

himself appears not to have devised the worst part of the story—that of Addison having used Tickell's name—till some years later. Addison was sufficiently magnanimous in praising his spiteful little antagonist as it was; he little knew how deeply that antagonist would seek to injure his reputation.

And here, before passing to the work which afforded the main pretext of the quarrel, it may be well to quote once more the celebrated satire. It may be remarked that its excellence is due in part to the fact that, for once, Pope does not lose his temper. His attack is qualified and really sharpened by an admission of Addison's excellence. It is, therefore, a real masterpiece of satire, not a simple lampoon. That it is an exaggeration is undeniable, and yet its very keenness gives a presumption that it is not altogether without foundation.

"Peace to all such! but were there one whose fires
True genius kindles and fair fame inspires;
Blest with each talent and each art to please,
And born to write, converse, and live with ease;
Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne:
View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
And hate for arts that caused himself to rise;
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike;
Just hint a fault and hesitate dislike;
Alike reserved to praise or to commend,
A timorous foe and a suspicious friend;
Dreading ev'n fools, by flatterers besieged,
And so obliging that he ne'er obliged;
Like Cato, give his little senate laws,
And sit attentive to his own applause;
While wits and templars every sentence raise,
And wonder with a foolish face of praise;
Who would not laugh if such a man there be?
Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?"

CHAPTER III.

POPE'S HOMER.

POPE'S uneasy relations with the wits at Button's were no obstacle to his success elsewhere. Swift, now at the height of his power, was pleased by his *Windsor Forest*, recommended it to Stella, and soon made the author's acquaintance. The first letter in their long correspondence is a laboured but fairly successful piece of pleasantry from Pope, upon Swift's having offered twenty guineas to the young Papist to change his religion. It is dated December 8, 1713. In the preceding month Bishop Kennet saw Swift in all his glory, and wrote an often quoted description of the scene. Swift was bustling about in the royal antechamber, swelling with conscious importance, distributing advice, promising patronage, whispering to ministers, and filling the whole room with his presence. He finally "instructed a young nobleman that the best poet in England was Mr. Pope, a Papist who had begun a translation of Homer into English verse, for which he must have them all subscribe; 'for,' says he, 'the author shall not begin to print till I have a thousand guineas for him!'" Swift introduced Pope to some of the leaders of the ministry, and he was soon acquainted with Oxford, Bolingbroke, Atterbury, and many other men of high position. Pope was not disinclined to pride himself upon his familiarity with the great, though boasting at the same time of his independence. In truth, the morbid vanity which was his cardinal weakness seems to have partaken sufficiently of the nature of genuine self-respect to preserve him from any unworthy concessions. If he flattered, it was as one who expected to be repaid in kind; and though his position was calculated to turn the head of a youth of five-and-twenty, he took his place as a right without humiliating his own dignity. Whether from principle or prudence, he judiciously kept himself free from identification with either party, and both sides took a pride in supporting the great literary undertaking which he had now announced.

When Pope first circulated proposals for translating Homer, Oxford and Bolingbroke were fellow-ministers, and Swift was their most effective organ in the press. At the time at which his first volume appeared, Bolingbroke was in exile, Oxford under impeachment, and Swift had retired savagely and sullenly, to his deanery.

Yet, through all the intervening political tempest, the subscription list grew and flourished. The pecuniary result was splendid. No author had ever made anything approaching the sum which Pope received, and very few authors, even in the present age of gold, would despise such payment. The details of the magnificent bargain have been handed down, and give the pecuniary measure of Pope's reputation.

The Iliad was to be published in six volumes. For each volume Lintot was to pay 200*l.*; and, besides this, he was to supply Pope gratuitously with the copies for his subscribers. The subscribers paid a guinea a volume, and, as 575 subscribers took 654 copies Pope received altogether 5320*l.* 4*s.* at the regular price, whilst some royal and distinguished subscribers paid larger sums. By the publication of the Odyssey Pope seems to have made about 3500*l.* more,* after paying his assistants. The result was, therefore, a total profit at least approaching 9000*l.* The last volume of the Odyssey did not appear till 1726, and the payments were thus spread over eleven years. Pope, however, saved enough to be more than comfortable. In the South Sea excitement he ventured to speculate; but though for a time he fancied himself to have made a large sum, he seems to have retired rather a loser than a gainer. But he could say with perfect truth that, "thanks to Homer," he "could live and thrive, indebted to no prince or peer alive." The money success is, however, of less interest to us than the literary. Pope put his best work into the translation of the Iliad. His responsibility, he said, weighed upon him terribly on starting. He used to dream of being on a long journey, uncertain which way to go, and doubting whether he would ever get to the end. Gradually he fell into the habit of translating thirty or forty verses before getting up, and then "piddling with it," for the rest of the morning; and the regular performance of his task made it tolerable. He used, he said at another time, to take advantage of the "first heat," then correct by the original and other translations; and finally to "give it a reading for the versification only." The statement must be partly modified by the suggestion that the translations were probably consulted before the original. Pope's ignorance of Greek—an awkward qualification for a translator of Homer—is undeniable. Gilbert Wakefield, who was, I believe, a fair scholar, and certainly a great admirer of Pope, declares his conviction to be, after a more careful examination of the Homer than any one is now likely to give, that Pope "collected the general purport of every passage from some of his predecessors—Dryden" (who only translated the first Iliad), "Dacier, Chapman, or Ogilby." He thinks that Pope would have been puzzled to catch at once the meaning even of the Latin translation, and points out proofs of his ignorance of both languages, and of "ignominious and puerile mistakes."

It is hard to understand at the present day the audacity which could lead a man so ill qualified in point of classical acquirements

* See Elwin's Pope, Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 129.

to undertake such a task. And yet Pope undoubtedly achieved, in some true sense, an astonishing success. He succeeded commercially; for Lintot, after supplying the subscription copies gratuitously, and so losing the cream of the probable purchasers, made a fortune by the remaining sale. He succeeded in the judgment both of the critics and of the public of the next generation. Johnson calls the Homer "the noblest version of poetry the world has ever seen." Gray declared that no other translation would ever equal it, and Gibbon that it had every merit except that of faithfulness to the original. This merit of fidelity, indeed, was scarcely claimed by any one. Bentley's phrase—"a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer"—expresses the uniform view taken from the first by all who could read both. Its fame however, survived into the present century. Byron speaks,—and speaks, I think, with genuine feeling—of the rapture with which he first read Pope as a boy, and says that no one will ever lay him down except for the original. Indeed the testimonies of opponents are as significant as those of admirers. Johnson remarks that the Homer "may be said to have tuned the English tongue," and that no writer since its appearance has wanted melody. Coleridge virtually admits the fact, though drawing a different conclusion, when he says that the translation of Homer has been one of the main sources of that "pseudo-poetic diction" which he and Wordsworth were struggling to put out of credit. Cowper, the earliest representative of the same movement, tried to supplant Pope's Homer by his own, and his attempt proved at least the position held in general estimation by his rival. If, in fact, Pope's Homer was a recognised model for near a century, we may dislike the style, but we must admit the power implied in a performance which thus became the accepted standard of style for the best part of a century. How, then, should we estimate the merits of this remarkable work? I give my own opinion upon the subject with diffidence, for it has been discussed by eminently qualified critics. The conditions of a satisfactory translation of Homer have been amply canvassed, and many experiments have been made by accomplished poets who have—what Pope certainly had not—a close acquaintance with the original, and a fine appreciation of its superlative beauties. From the point of view now generally adopted, the task even of criticism requires this double qualification. Not only can no man translate Homer, but no man can even criticise a translation of Homer, without being at once a poet and a fine classical scholar. So far as this is true, I can only apologise for speaking at all, and should be content to refer my readers to such able guides as Mr. Matthew Arnold and the late Professor Conington. And yet I think that something remains to be said which has a bearing upon Pope, however little it may concern Homer.

We—if "we" means modern writers of some classical culture—can claim to appreciate Homer far better than the contemporaries of Pope. But our appreciation involves a clear recognition of the vast difference between ourselves and the ancient Greeks. We

see the Homeric poems in their true perspective through the dim vista of shadowy centuries. We regard them as the growth of a long past stage in the historical evolution; implying a different social order—a different ideal of life—an archaic conception of the world and its forces, only to be reconstructed for the imagination by help of long training and serious study. The multiplicity of the laws imposed upon the translator is the consequence of this perception. They amount to saying that a man must manage to project himself into a distant period, and saturate his mind with the corresponding modes of life. If the feat is possible at all, it requires a great and conscious effort, and the attainment of a state of mind which can only be preserved by constant attention. The translator has to wear a mask which is always in danger of being rudely shattered. Such an intellectual feat is likely to produce what, in the most obvious sense, one would call highly artificial work. Modern classicism must be fine-spun, and smell rather of the hot-house than the open air. Undoubtedly some exquisite literary achievements have been accomplished in this spirit; but they are, after all, calculated for the small circle of cultivated minds, and many of their merits can be appreciated only by professors qualified by special training. Most frequently we can hope for pretty playthings, or, at best, for skilful restorations which show learning and taste far more distinctly than a glowing imagination. But even if an original poet can breathe some spirit into classical poems, the poor translator, with the dread of philologists and antiquarians in the background, is so fettered that free movement becomes almost impossible. No one, I should venture to prophesy, will really succeed in such work unless he frankly accepts the impossibility of reproducing the original, and aims only at an equivalent for some of its aspects. The perception of this change will enable us to realise Pope's mode of approaching the problem. The condemnatory epithet most frequently applied to him is "artificial;" and yet, as I have just said, a modern translator is surely more artificial, so far as he is attempting a more radical transformation of his own thoughts into the forms of a past epoch. But we can easily see in what sense Pope's work fairly deserves the name. The poets of an older period frankly adopted the classical mythology without any apparent sense of incongruity. They mix heathen deities with Christian saints, and the ancient heroes adopt the manners of chivalrous romance without the slightest difficulty. The freedom was still granted to the writers of the renaissance. Milton makes Phœbus and St. Peter discourse in successive stanzas, as if they belonged to the same pantheon. For poetical purposes the old gods are simply canonised as Christian saints, as in a more theological frame of mind they are regarded as devils. In the reign of common sense this was no longer possible. The incongruity was recognised and condemned. The gods were vanishing under the clearer light, as modern thought began more consciously to assert its independence. Yet the unreality of the old mythology is not felt to be any objection to their use as conven-

tional symbols. Homer's gods, says Pope in his preface, are still the gods of poetry. Their vitality was nearly extinct, but they were regarded as convenient personifications of abstract qualities, machines for epic poetry, or figures to be used in allegory. In the absence of a true historical perception, the same view was attributed to Homer. Homer, as Pope admits, did not invent the gods, but he was the "first who brought them into a system of machinery for poetry," and showed his fertile imagination by clothing the properties of the elements, and the virtues and vices in forms and persons. And thus Pope does not feel that he is diverging from the spirit of the old mythology when he regards the gods, not as the spontaneous growth of the primitive imagination, but as deliberate contrivances intended to convey moral truth in allegorical fables, and probably devised by sages for the good of the vulgar.

The old gods, then, were made into stiff mechanical figures, as dreary as Justice with her scales, or Fame blowing a trumpet on a monument. They belonged to that family of dismal personifications which it was customary to mark with the help of capital letters. Certainly they are a dismal and frigid set of beings, though they still lead a shivering existence on the tops of public monuments, and hold an occasional wreath over the head of a British grenadier. To identify the Homeric gods with these wearisome constructions was to have a more serious disqualification for fully entering into Homer's spirit than even an imperfect acquaintance with Greek, and Pope is greatly exercised in his mind by their eating, and drinking, and fighting, and uncompromising anthropomorphism. He apologises for his author, and tries to excuse him for unwilling compliance with popular prejudices. The Homeric theology, he urges, was still substantially sound, and Homer had always a distinct moral and political purpose. The Iliad, for example, was meant to show the wickedness of quarrelling, and the evil results of an insatiable thirst for glory, though shallow persons have thought that Homer only thought to please.

The artificial diction about which so much has been said is the natural vehicle of this treatment. The set of phrases, and the peculiar mould into which his sentences were cast, was already the accepted type for poetry which aimed at dignity. He was following Dryden, as his own performance became the law for the next generation. The style in which a woman is called a nymph—and women generally are "the fair"—in which shepherds are conscious swains, and a poet invokes the muses and strikes a lyre, and breathes on a reed, and a nightingale singing becomes Philomel "pouring her throat," represents a fashion as worn out as hoops and wigs. By the time of Wordsworth it was a mere survival—a dead form remaining after its true function had entirely vanished. The proposal to return to the language of common life was the natural revolt of one who desired poetry to be above all things the genuine expression of real emotion. Yet it is, I think, impossible to maintain that the diction of poetry should be simply that of common life.

The true principle would rather seem to be that any style becomes bad when it dies; when it is used merely as a tradition, and not as the best mode of producing the desired impression; and when, therefore, it represents a rule imposed from without, and is not an expression of the spontaneous working of minds in which the corresponding impulse is thoroughly incarnated. In such a case, no doubt, the diction becomes a burden, and a man is apt to fancy himself a poet because he is the slave of the external form, instead of using it as the most familiar instrument. By Wordsworth's time the Pope style was thus effete; what ought to be the dress of thought had become the rigid armour into which thought was forcibly compressed, and a revolt was inevitable. We may agree, too, that his peculiar style was in a sense artificial, even in the days of Pope. It had come into existence during the reign of the Restoration wits, under the influence of foreign models, not as the spontaneous outgrowth of a gradual development, and had therefore something mechanical and conscious, even when it flourished most vigorously. It came in with the periwigs, to which it is so often compared, and, like the artificial head-gear, was an attempt to give a dignified or full-dress appearance to the average prosaic human being. Having this innate weakness of pomposity and exaggeration, it naturally expired, and became altogether ridiculous, with the generation to which it belonged. As the wit or man of the world had at bottom a very inadequate conception of epic poetry, he became inevitably strained and contorted when he tried to give himself the airs of a poet.

After making all such deductions, it would still seem that the bare fact that he was working in a generally accepted style gave Pope a very definite advantage. He spoke more or less in a falsetto, but he could at once strike a key intelligible to his audience. An earlier poet would simply annex Homer's gods and fix them with a mediæval framework. A more modern poet tries to find some style which will correspond to the Homeric as closely as possible, and feels that he is making an experiment beset with all manner of difficulties. Pope needed no more to bother himself about such matters than about grammatical or philological refinements. He found a ready-made style which was assumed to be correct; he had to write in regular rhymed couplets, as neatly rhymed and tersely expressed as might be; and the diction was equally settled. He was to keep to Homer for the substance, but he could throw in any little ornaments to suit the taste of his readers; and if they found out a want of scrupulous fidelity, he might freely say that he did not aim at such details. Working, therefore, upon the given data, he could enjoy a considerable amount of freedom, and throw his whole energy into the task of forcible expression without feeling himself trammelled at every step. The result would certainly not be Homer, but it might be a fine epic poem as epic poetry was understood in the days of Anne and George I.—a hybrid genus, at the best; something without enough constitutional vigour to be valuable when really original,

but not without a merit of its own when modelled upon the lines laid down in the great archetype.

When we look at Pope's Iliad upon this understanding, we cannot fail, I think, to admit that it has merits which make its great success intelligible. If we read it as a purely English poem, the sustained vivacity and emphasis of the style give it a decisive superiority over its rivals. It has become the fashion to quote Chapman since the noble sonnet in which Keats, in testifying to the power of the Elizabethan translator, testifies rather to his own exquisite perception. Chapman was a poet worthy of our great poetic period, and Pope himself testifies to the "daring fiery spirit" which animates his translation, and says that it is not unlike what Homer himself might have written in his youth—surely not a grudging praise. But though this is true, I will venture to assert that Chapman also sins, not merely by his love of quaintness, but by constantly indulging in sheer doggerel. If his lines do not stagnate, they foam and fret like a mountain brook, instead of flowing continuously and majestically like a great river. He surpasses Pope chiefly, as it seems to me, where Pope's conventional verbiage smothers and conceals some vivid image from nature. Pope, of course, was a thorough man of forms, and when he has to speak of sea, or sky, or mountain, generally draws upon the current coin of poetic phraseology, which has lost all sharpness of impression in its long circulation. Here, for example, is Pope's version of a simile in the fourth book:—

> "As when the winds, ascending by degrees,
> First move the whitening surface of the seas,
> The billows float in order to the shore,
> The waves behind roll on the waves before,
> Till with the growing storm the deeps arise,
> Foam o'er the rocks, and thunder to the skies."

Each phrase is either wrong or escapes from error by vagueness, and one would swear that Pope had never seen the sea. Chapman says,—

> "And as when with the west wind flaws, the sea thrusts up her waves
> One after other, thick and high, upon the groaning shores,
> First in herself loud, but opposed with banks and rocks she roars,
> And all her back in bristles set, spits every way her foam."

This is both clumsy and introduces the quaint and unauthorised image of a pig, but it is unmistakably vivid. Pope is equally troubled when he has to deal with Homer's downright vernacular. He sometimes ventures apologetically to give the original word. He allows Achilles to speak pretty vigorously to Agamemnon in the first book:—

> "O monster! mix'd of insolence and fear,
> Thou dog in forehead, but in heart a deer!"

Chapman translates the phrase more fully, but adds a characteristic quibble :—

> "Thou ever steep'd in wine,
> Dog's face, with heart but of a hart."

Tickell manages the imputation of drink, but has to slur over the dog and the deer :—

> "Valiant with wine and furious from the bowl,
> Thou fierce-look'd talker, with a coward soul."

Elsewhere Pope hesitates in the use of such plain speaking. He allows Teucer to call Hector a dog, but apologises in a note. "This is literal from the Greek," he says, "and I have ventured it;" though he quotes Milton's "dogs of hell" to back himself with a precedent. But he cannot quite stand Homer's downright comparison of Ajax to an ass, and speaks of him in gingerly fashion as—

> "The slow beast with heavy strength endued."

Pope himself thinks the passage "inimitably just and beautiful;" but on the whole, he says, "a translator owes so much to the taste of the age in which he lives as not to make too great a compliment to the former [age], and this induced me to omit the mention of the word *ass* in the translation." Boileau and Longinus, he tells us, would approve the omission of mean and vulgar words. "Ass" is the vilest word imaginable in English or Latin, but of dignity enough in Greek and Hebrew to be employed "on the most magnificent occasions."

The Homeric phrase is thus often muffled and deadened by Pope's verbiage. Dignity of a kind is gained at the cost of energy. If such changes admit of some apology as an attempt to preserve what is undoubtedly a Homeric characteristic, we must admit that the "dignity" is often false; it rests upon mere mouthing instead of simplicity and directness, and suggests that Pope might have approved the famous emendation "he died in indigent circumstances," for "he died poor." The same weakness is perhaps more annoying when it leads to sins of commission. Pope never scruples to amend Homer by little epigrammatic amplifications, which are characteristic of the contemporary rhetoric. A single illustration of a fault sufficiently notorious will be sufficient. When Nestor, in the eleventh book, rouses Diomed at night, Pope naturally smooths down the testy remark of the sleepy warrior; but he tries to improve Nestor's directions. Nestor tells Diomed, in most direct terms, that the need is great, and that he must go at once and rouse Ajax. In Pope's translation we have—

> "Each single Greek in this conclusive strife
> Stands on the sharpest edge of death or life;

Yet if my years thy kind regard engage,
Employ thy youth as I employ my age;
Succeed to these my cares, and rouse the rest;
He serves me most who serves his country best."

The false air of epigram which Pope gives to the fourth line is characteristic; and the concluding tag, which is quite unauthorised, reminds us irresistibly of one of the rhymes which an actor always spouted to the audience by way of winding up an act in the contemporary drama. Such embroidery is profusely applied by Pope wherever he thinks that Homer, like Diomed, is slumbering too deeply. And of course, that is not the way in which Nestor roused Diomed or Homer keeps his readers awake.

Such faults have been so fully exposed that we need not dwell upon them further. They come to this, that Pope was really a wit of the days of Queen Anne, and saw only that aspect of Homer which was visible to his kind. The poetic mood was not for him a fine frenzy—for good sense must condemn all frenzy—but a deliberate elevation of the bard by high-heeled shoes and a full-bottomed wig. Seas and mountains, being invisible from Button's, could only be described by worn phrases from the Latin grammar. Even his narrative must be full of epigrams to avoid the one deadly sin of dulness, and his language must be decorous even at the price of being sometimes emasculated. But accept these conditions, and much still remains. After all, a wit was still a human being, and much more nearly related to us than an ancient Greek. Pope's style, when he is at his best, has the merit of being thoroughly alive; there are no dead masses of useless verbiage; every excrescence has been carefully pruned away; slovenly paraphrases and indistinct slurrings over of the meaning have disappeared. He corrected carefully and scrupulously, as his own statement implies, not with a view of transferring as large a portion as possible of his author's meaning to his own verses, but in order to make the versification as smooth and the sense as transparent as possible. We have the pleasure which we receive from really polished oratory; every point is made to tell; if the emphasis is too often pointed by some showy antithesis, we are at least never uncertain as to the meaning; and if the versification is often monotonous, it is articulate and easily caught at first sight. These are the essential merits of good declamation, and it is in the true declamatory passages that Pope is at his best. The speeches of his heroes are often admirable, full of spirit, well balanced and skilfully arranged pieces of rhetoric—not a mere inorganic series of observations. Undoubtedly the warriors are a little too epigrammatic and too consciously didactic; and we feel almost scandalised when they take to downright blows, as though Walpole and St. John were interrupting a debate in the House of Commons by fisticuffs. They would be better in the senate than the field. But the brilliant rhetoric implies also a sense of dignity which is not mere artificial mouthing. Pope, as it seems to me, rises to a level of sustained

eloquence when he has to act as interpreter for the direct expression of broad, magnanimous sentiment. Classical critics may explain by what shades of feeling the aristocratic grandeur of soul of an English noble differed from the analogous quality in heroic Greece, and find the difference reflected in the "grand style" of Pope as compared with that of Homer. But Pope could at least assume with admirable readiness the lofty air of superiority to personal fears, and patriotic devotion to a great cause, which is common to the type in every age. His tendency to didactic platitudes is at least out of place in such cases, and his dread of vulgarity and quaintness, with his genuine feeling for breadth of effect, frequently enables him to be really dignified and impressive. It will, perhaps, be sufficient illustration of these qualities if I conclude these remarks by giving his translation of Hector's speech to Polydamas in the twelfth book, with its famous *εἷς οἰωνὸς ἄριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πάτρης.*

"To him then Hector with disdain return'd;
(Fierce as he spoke, his eyes with fury burn'd)—
Are these the faithful counsels of thy tongue?
Thy will is partial, not thy reason wrong;
Or if the purpose of thy heart thou sent,
Sure Heaven resumes the little sense it lent—
What coward counsels would thy madness move
Against the word, the will reveal'd of Jove?
The leading sign, the irrevocable nod
And happy thunders of the favouring God?
These shall I slight? And guide my wavering mind
By wand'ring birds that flit with every wind?
Ye vagrants of the sky! your wings extend
Or where the suns arise or where descend;
To right or left, unheeded take your way,
While I the dictates of high heaven obey.
Without a sigh his sword the brave man draws,
And asks no omen but his country's cause.
But why should'st thou suspect the war's success?
None fears it more, as none promotes it less.
Tho' all our ships amid yon ships expire,
Trust thy own cowardice to escape the fire.
Troy and her sons may find a general grave,
But thou canst live, for thou canst be a slave.
Yet should the fears that wary mind suggests
Spread their cold poison through our soldiers' breasts,
My javelin can revenge so base a part,
And free the soul that quivers in thy heart."

The six volumes of the Iliad were published during the years 1715–1720, and were closed by a dedication to Congreve, who, as an eminent man of letters, not too closely connected with either Whigs or Tories, was the most appropriate recipient of such a compliment. Pope was enriched by his success, and no doubt wearied by his labours. But his restless intellect would never

leave him to indulge in prolonged repose, and, though not avaricious, he was not more averse than other men to increasing his fortune. He soon undertook two sufficiently laborious works. The first was an edition of Shakspeare, for which he only received 217*l.* 10*s.*, and which seems to have been regarded as a failure. It led, like his other publications, to a quarrel to be hereafter mentioned, but need not detain us at present. It appeared in 1725, when he was already deep in another project. The success of the Iliad naturally suggested an attempt upon the Odyssey. Pope, however, was tired of translating, and he arranged for assistance. He took into alliance a couple of Cambridge men, who were small poets capable of fairly adopting his versification. One of them was William Broome, a clergyman who held several livings and married a rich widow. Unfortunately his independence did not restrain him from writing poetry, for which want of means would have been the only sufficient excuse. He was a man of some classical attainments, and had helped Pope in compiling notes to the Iliad from Eustathius, an author whom Pope would have been scarcely able to read without such assistance. Elijah Fenton, his other assistant, was a Cambridge man who had sacrificed his claims of preferment by becoming a non-juror, and picked up a living partly by writing and chiefly by acting as tutor to Lord Orrery, and afterwards in the family of Trumball's widow. Pope, who introduced him to Lady Trumball, had also introduced him to Craggs, who, when Secretary of State, felt his want of a decent education, and wished to be polished by some competent person. He seems to have been a kindly, idle, honourable man, who died, says Pope, of indolence, and more immediately, it appears, of the gout. The alliance thus formed was rather a delicate one, and was embittered by some of Pope's usual trickery. In issuing his proposals he spoke in ambiguous terms of two friends who were to render him some undefined assistance, and did not claim to be the translator, but to have undertaken the translation. The assistants, in fact, did half the work, Broome translating eight, and Fenton four, out of the twenty-four books. Pope was unwilling to acknowledge the full amount of their contributions: he persuaded Broome—a weak, good-natured man—to set his hand to a postscript to the Odyssey, in which only three books are given to Broome himself, and only two to Fenton. When Pope was attacked for passing off other people's verses as his own, he boldly appealed to this statement to prove that he had only received Broome's help in three books, and at the same time stated the whole amount which he had paid for the eight, as though it had been paid for the three. When Broome, in spite of his subservience, became a little restive under this treatment, Pope indirectly admitted the truth by claiming only twelve books in an advertisement to his works, and in a note to the *Dunciad*, but did not explicitly retract the other statement. Broome could not effectively rebuke his fellow-sinner. He had, in fact, conspired with Pope to attract the public by the use of the most popular name, and could

not even claim his own afterwards. He had, indeed, talked too much, according to Pope; and the poet's morality is oddly illustrated in a letter, in which he complains of Broome's indiscretion for letting out the secret; and explains that, as the facts are so far known, it would now be "unjust and dishonourable" to continue the concealment. It would be impossible to accept more frankly the theory that lying is wrong when it is found out. Meanwhile Pope's conduct to his victims or accomplices was not over-generous. He made over 3500*l.* after paying Broome 500*l.* (including 100*l.* for notes) and Fenton 200*l.*—that is, 50*l.* a book. The rate of pay was as high as the work was worth, and as much as it would fetch in the open market. The large sum was entirely due to Pope's reputation, though obtained, so far as the true authorship was concealed, upon something like false pretences. Still, we could have wished that he had been a little more liberal with his share of the plunder. A coolness ensued between the principal and his partners in consequence of these questionable dealings. Fenton seems never to have been reconciled to Pope, though they did not openly quarrel, and Pope wrote a laudatory epitaph for him on his death in 1730. Broome—a weaker man—though insulted by Pope in the *Dunciad* and the Miscellanies, accepted a reconciliation, for which Pope seems to have been eager, perhaps feeling some touch of remorse for the injuries which he had inflicted.

The shares of the three colleagues in the Odyssey are not to be easily distinguished by internal evidence. On trying the experiment by a cursory reading, I confess (though a critic does not willingly admit his fallibility) that I took some of Broome's work for Pope's, and, though closer study or an acuter perception might discriminate more accurately, I do not think that the distinction would be easy. This may be taken to confirm the common theory that Pope's versification was a mere mechanical trick. Without admitting this, it must be admitted that the external characteristics of his manner were easily caught; and that it was not hard for a clever versifier to produce something closely resembling his inferior work, especially when following the same original. But it may be added that Pope's Odyssey was really inferior to the Iliad, both because his declamatory style is more out of place in its romantic narrative, and because he was weary and languid, and glad to turn his fame to account without more labour than necessary. The Odyssey, I may say, in conclusion, led to one incidental advantage. It was criticised by Spence, a mild and cultivated scholar, who was professor of poetry at Oxford. His observations, according to Johnson, were candid, though not indicative of a powerful mind. Pope, he adds, had in Spence the first experience of a critic "who censured with respect and praised with alacrity." Pope made Spence's acquaintance, recommended him to patrons, and was repaid with warm admiration."

CHAPTER IV.

POPE AT TWICKENHAM.

WHEN Pope finished his translation of the Iliad, he was congratulated by his friend Gay in a pleasant copy of verses marked by the usual *bonhomie* of the fat, kindly man. Gay supposes himself to be welcoming his friend on the return from his long expedition.

> "Did I not see thee when thou first sett'st sail,
> To seek adventures fair in Homer's land?
> Did I not see thy sinking spirits fail,
> And wish thy bark had never left the strand?
> Even in mid ocean often didst thou quail,
> And oft lift up thy holy eye and hand,
> Praying to virgin dear and saintly choir
> Back to the port to bring thy bark entire."

And now the bark is sailing up the Thames, with bells ringing, bonfires blazing, and "bones and cleavers" clashing. So splendid a show suggests Lord Mayor's Day, but, in fact, it is only the crowd of Pope's friends come to welcome him on his successful achievement; and a long catalogue follows, in which each is indicated by some appropriate epithet. The list includes some doubtful sympathisers, such as Gildon, who comes "hearing thou hast riches," and even Dennis, who, in fact, continued to growl out criticisms against the triumphant poet. Steele, too, and Tickell,—

> "Whose skiff (in partnership they say)
> Set forth for Greece but founder'd on the way,"

would not applaud very cordially. Addison, their common hero, was beyond the reach of satire or praise. Parnell, who had contributed a life of Homer, died in 1718; and Rowe and Garth, sound Whigs, but friends and often boon companions of the little papist, had followed. Swift was breathing "Bœotian air" in his deanery, and St. John was "confined to foreign climates" for very sufficient reasons Any such roll-call of friends must show melancholy gaps, and sometimes the gaps are more significant than the names. Yet Pope could boast of a numerous

body of men, many of them of high distinction, who were ready to give him a warm welcome. There were, indeed, few eminent persons of the time, either in the political or literary worlds, with whom this sensitive and restless little invalid did not come into contact, hostile or friendly, at some part of his career. His friendships were keen and his hostilities more than proportionally bitter. We see his fragile figure, glancing rapidly from one hospitable circle to another, but always standing a little apart; now paying court to some conspicuous wit, or philosopher, or statesman, or beauty; now taking deadly offence for some utterly inexplicable reason; writhing with agony under clumsy blows which a robuster nature would have met with contemptuous laughter; racking his wits to contrive exquisite compliments, and suddenly exploding in sheer Billingsgate; making a mountain of every mole-hill in his pilgrimage; always preoccupied with his last literary project; and yet finding time for innumerable intrigues, for carrying out schemes of vengeance for wounded vanity, and for introducing himself into every quarrel that was going on around him. In all his multifarious schemes and occupations he found it convenient to cover himself by elaborate mystifications, and was as anxious (it would seem) to deceive posterity as to impose upon contemporaries; and hence it is as difficult clearly to disentangle the twisted threads of his complex history as to give an intelligible picture of the result of the investigation. The publication of the Iliad, however, marks a kind or central point in his history. Pope has reached independence, and become the acknowledged head of the literary world; and it will be convenient here to take a brief survey of his position, before following out two or three different series of events, which can scarcely be given in chronological order. Pope, when he first came to town and followed Wycherley about like a dog, had tried to assume the airs of a rake. The same tone is adopted in many of his earlier letters. At Binfield he became demure, correct, and respectful to the religious scruples of his parents. In his visits to London and Bath he is little better than one of the wicked. In a copy of verses (not too decent) written in 1715, as a "Farewell to London," he gives us to understand that he has been hearing the chimes at midnight, and knows where the bona-robas dwell. He is forced to leave his jovial friends and his worrying publishers "for Homer (damn him!) calls." He is, so he assures us,

> "Still idle, with a busy air
> Deep whimsies to contrive;
> The gayest valetudinaire,
> Most thinking rake alive."

And he takes a sad leave of London pleasures.

> "Luxurious lobster nights, farewell,
> For sober, studious days!
> And Burlington's delicious meal
> For salads, tarts, and pease."

Writing from Bath a little earlier, to Teresa and Martha Blount, he employs the same jaunty strain. "Every one," he says, "values Mr. Pope, but every one for a different reason. One for his adherence to the Catholic faith, another for his neglect of Popish superstition; one for his good behaviour, another for his whimsicalities; Mr. Titcomb for his pretty atheistical jests; Mr. Caryll for his moral and Christian sentences; Mrs. Teresa for his reflections on Mrs. Patty; Mrs. Patty for his reflections on Mrs. Teresa." He is an "agreeable rattle;" the accomplished rake, drinking with the wits, though above boozing with the squire, and capable of alleging his drunkenness as an excuse for writing very questionable letters to ladies.

Pope was too sickly and too serious to indulge long in such youthful fopperies. He had no fund of high spirits to draw upon, and his playfulness was too near deadly earnest for the comedy of common life. He had too much intellect to be a mere fribble, and had not the strong animal passions of the thorough debauchee. Age came upon him rapidly, and he had sown his wild oats, such as they were, while still a young man. Meanwhile his reputation and his circle of acquaintances were rapidly spreading, and in spite of all his disqualifications for the coarser forms of conviviality, he took the keenest possible interest in the life that went on around him. A satirist may not be a pleasant companion, but he must frequent society; he must be on the watch for his natural prey; he must describe the gossip of the day, for it is the raw material from which he spins his finished fabric. Pope, as his writings show, was an eager recipient of all current rumours, whether they affected his aristocratic friends or the humble denizens of Grub-street. Fully to elucidate his poems, a commentator requires to have at his fingers' ends the whole *chronique scandaleuse* of the day. With such tastes, it was natural that, as the subscriptions for his Homer began to pour in, he should be anxious to move nearer the great social centre. London itself might be too exciting for his health and too destructive of literary leisure. Accordingly, in 1716, the little property at Binfield was sold, and the Pope family moved to Mawson's New Buildings, on the bank of the river at Chiswick, and "under the wing of my Lord Burlington." He seems to have been a little ashamed of the residence; the name of it is certainly neither aristocratic nor poetical. Two years later, on the death of his father, he moved up the river to the villa at Twickenham, which has always been associated with his name, and was his home for the last twenty-five years of his life. There he had the advantage of being just on the boundary of the great world. He was within easy reach of Hampton Court, Richmond, and Kew; places which, during Pope's residence, were frequently glorified by the presence of George II. and his heir and natural enemy, Frederick, Prince of Wales. Pope, indeed, did not enjoy the honour of any personal interview with royalty. George is said to have called him a very honest man after reading his *Dunciad;* but Pope's references to his Sovereign were not complimentary. There was a report, re-

ferred to by Swift, that Pope had purposely avoided a visit from Queen Caroline. He was on very friendly terms with Mrs. Howard—afterwards Lady Suffolk—the powerless mistress, who was intimate with two of his chief friends, Bathurst and Peterborough, and who settled at Marble Villa, in Twickenham. Pope and Bathurst helped to lay out her grounds, and she stayed there to become a friendly neighbour of Horace Walpole, who, unluckily for lovers of gossip, did not become a Twickenhamite until three years after Pope's death. Pope was naturally more allied with the Prince of Wales, who occasionally visited him, and became intimate with the band of patriots and enthusiasts who saw in the heir to the throne the coming "patriot king." Bolingbroke, too, the great inspirer of the opposition, and Pope's most revered friend, was for ten years at Dawley, within an easy drive. London was easily accessible by road and by the river which bounded his lawn. His waterman appears to have been one of the regular members of his household. There he had every opportunity for the indulgence of his favourite tastes. The villa was on one of the loveliest reaches of the Thames, not yet polluted by the encroachments of London. The house itself was destroyed in the beginning of this century; and the garden (if we may trust Horace Walpole) had been previously spoilt. This garden, says Walpole, was a little bit of ground of five acres, enclosed by three lanes. "Pope had twisted and twirled and rhymed and harmonised this, till it appeared two or three sweet little lawns, opening and opening beyond one another, and the whole surrounded with impenetrable woods." These, it appears, were hacked and hewed into mere desolation by the next proprietor. Pope was, indeed, an ardent lover of the rising art of landscape gardening; he was familiar with Bridgeman and Kent, the great authorities of the time, and his example and precepts helped to promote the development of a less formal style. His theories are partly indicated in the description of Timon's villa.

> "His gardens next your admiration call,
> On every side you look, behold the wall!
> No pleasing intricacies intervene,
> No artful wildness to perplex the scene;
> Grove nods at grove, each alley has a brother,
> And half the platform just reflects the other."

Pope's taste, indeed, tolerated various old-fashioned excrescences which we profess to despise. He admired mock classical temples and obelisks erected judiciously at the ends of vistas. His most famous piece of handiwork, the grotto at Twickenham, still remains, and is, in fact, a short tunnel under the high road to connect his grounds with the lawn which slopes to the river. He describes, in a letter to one of his friends, his "temple wholly comprised of shells in the rustic manner," and his famous grotto so provided with mirrors that when the doors are shut it becomes a camera obscura, reflecting hills, river, and boats, and when lighted up glitters with rays reflected from bits of looking-glass in angular

form. His friends pleased him by sending pieces of spar from the mines of Cornwall and Derbyshire, petrifactions, marble, coral, crystals, and humming-birds' nests. It was, in fact, a gorgeous example of the kind of architecture with which the cit delighted to adorn his country box. The hobby, whether in good taste or not, gave Pope never-ceasing amusement; and he wrote some characteristic verses in its praise.

In his grotto, as he declares in another place, he could sit in peace with his friends, undisturbed by the distant din of the world.

> "There my retreat the best companions grace,
> Chiefs out of war, and statesmen out of place;
> There St. John mingles with my friendly bowl
> The feast of reason and the flow of soul;
> And he whose lightning pierced the Iberian lines
> Now forms my quincunx and now ranks my vines,
> Or tames the genius of the stubborn plain
> Almost as quickly as he conquer'd Spain."

The grotto, one would fear, was better fitted for frogs than for philosophers capable of rheumatic twinges. But deducting what we please from such utterances on the score of affectation, the picture of Pope amusing himself with his grotto and his plantations, directing old John Searle, his gardener, and conversing with the friends whom he compliments so gracefully, is, perhaps, the pleasantest in his history. He was far too restless and too keenly interested in society and literature to resign himself permanently to any such retreat.

Pope's constitutional irritability kept him constantly on the wing. Though little interested in politics, he liked to be on the edge of any political commotion. He appeared in London on the death of Queen Caroline, in 1737; and Bathurst remarked that "he was as sure to be there in a bustle as a porpoise in a storm." "Our friend Pope," said Jarvas not long before, "is off and on, here and there, everywhere and nowhere, *à son ordinaire*, and, therefore as well as we can hope for a carcase so crazy." The Twickenham villa, though nominally dedicated to repose, became, of course, a centre of attraction for the interviewers of the day. The opening lines of the Prologue to the Satires give a vivacious description of the crowds of authors who rushed to "Twitnam," to obtain his patronage or countenance, in a day when editors were not the natural scapegoats of such aspirants.

> "What walls can guard me, or what shades can hide?
> They pierce my thickets, through my grot they glide;
> By land, by water, they renew the charge;
> They stop the chariot and they board the barge:
> No place is sacred, not the church is free,
> E'en Sunday shines no Sabbath-day to me."

And even at an earlier period he occasionally retreated from the bustle to find time for his Homer. Lord Harcourt, the Chancellor

in the last years of Queen Anne, allowed him to take up his residence in his old house of Stanton Harcourt, in Oxfordshire. He inscribed on a pane of glass in an upper room, "In the year 1718 Alexander Pope finished here the fifth volume of Homer." In his earlier days he was often rambling about on horseback. A letter from Jervas gives the plan of one such jaunt (in 1715), with Arbuthnot and Disney for companions. Arbuthnot is to be commander-in-chief, and allows only a shirt and a cravat to be carried in each traveller's pocket. They are to make a moderate journey each day, and stay at the houses of various friends, ending ultimately at Bath. Another letter of about the same date describes a ride to Oxford, in which Pope is overtaken by his publisher, Lintot, who lets him into various secrets of the trade, and proposes that Pope should turn an ode of Horace whilst sitting under the trees to rest. "Lord, if you pleased, what a clever miscellany might you make at leisure hours!" exclaimed the man of business; and though Pope laughed at the advice, we might fancy that he took it to heart. He always had bits of verse on the anvil, ready to be hammered and polished at any moment. But even Pope could not be always writing, and the mere mention of these rambles suggests pleasant lounging through old-world country lanes of the quiet century. We think of the roadside life seen by Parson Adams or Humphry Clinker, and of which Mr. Borrow caught the last glimpse when dwelling in the tents of the Romany. In later days Pope had to put his "crazy carcase" into a carriage, and occasionally came in for less pleasant experiences. Whilst driving home one night from Dawley, in Bolingbroke's carriage and six, he was upset in a stream. He escaped drowning, though the water was "up to the knots of his periwig," but he was so cut by the broken glass that he nearly lost the use of his right hand. On another occasion Spence was delighted by the sudden appearance of the poet at Oxford, "dreadfully fatigued;" he had good-naturedly lent his own chariot to a lady who had been hurt in an upset, and had walked three miles to Oxford on a sultry day.

A man of such brilliant wit, familiar with so many social circles, should have been a charming companion. It must, however, be admitted that the accounts which have come down to us do not confirm such preconceived impressions. Like his great rival, Addison, though for other reasons, he was generally disappointing in society. Pope, as may be guessed from Spence's reports, had a large fund of interesting literary talk, such as youthful aspirants to fame would be delighted to receive with reverence; he had the reputation for telling anecdotes skilfully, and we may suppose that when he felt at ease, with a respectful and safe companion, he could do himself justice. But he must have been very trying to his hosts. He could seldom lay aside his self-consciousness sufficiently to write an easy letter; and the same fault probably spoilt his conversation. Swift complains of him as a silent and inattentive companion. He went to sleep at his own table, says Johnson, when the Prince of Wales was talking poetry to him—certainly a severe

trial. He would, we may guess, be silent till he had something to say worthy of the great Pope, and would then doubt whether it was not wise to treasure it up for preservation in a couplet. His sister declared that she had never seen him laugh heartily; and Spence, who records the saying, is surprised, because Pope was said to have been very lively in his youth; but admits that in later years he never went beyond a "particular easy smile." A hearty laugh would have sounded strangely from the touchy, moody, intriguing little man, who could "hardly drink tea without a stratagem." His sensitiveness, indeed, appearing by his often weeping when he read moving passages; but we can hardly imagine him as ever capable of genial self-abandonment.

His unsocial habits, indeed, were a natural consequence of ill-health. He never seems to have been thoroughly well for many days together. He implied no more than the truth when he speaks of his Muse as helping him through that "long disease, his life." Writing to Bathurst in 1728, he says that he does not expect to enjoy any health for four days together; and, not long after, Bathurst remonstrates with him for his carelessness, asking him whether it is not enough to have the headache for four days in the week and be sick for the other three. It is no small proof of intellectual energy that he managed to do so much thorough work under such disadvantages, and his letters show less of the invalid's querulous spirit than we might well have pardoned. Johnson gives a painful account of his physical defects, on the authority of an old servant of Lord Oxford, who frequently saw him in his later years. He was so weak as to be unable to rise to dress himself without help. He was so sensitive to cold that he had to wear a kind of fur doublet under a coarse linen shirt; one of his sides was contracted and he could scarcely stand upright till he was laced into a boddice made of stiff canvas; his legs were so slender that he had to wear three pairs of stockings, which he was unable to draw on and off without help. His seat had to be raised to bring him to a level with common tables. In one of his papers in the *Guardian* he describes himself apparently as Dick Distich: "a lively little creature, with long legs and arms; a spider * is no ill emblem of him; he has been taken at a distance for a small windmill." His face, says Johnson, was "not displeasing," and the portraits are eminently characteristic. The thin, drawn features wear the expression of habitual pain, but are brightened up by the vivid and penetrating eye, which seems to be the characteristic poetical beauty.

It was, after all, a gallant spirit which got so much work out of this crazy carcase, and kept it going, spite of all its feebleness, for fifty-six years. The servant whom Johnson quotes said that she was called from her bed four times in one night, "in the dreadful winter of Forty," to supply him with paper, lest he should lose a thought. His constitution was already breaking down, but

* The same comparison is made by Cibber in a rather unsavoury passage.

the intellect was still striving to save every moment allowed to him. His friends laughed at his habit of scribbling upon odd bits of paper. "Paper-sparing" Pope is the epithet bestowed upon him by Swift, and a great part of the Iliad is written upon the backs of letters. The habit seems to have been regarded as illustrative of his economical habits; but it was also natural to a man who was on the watch to turn every fragment of time to account. If anything was to be finished, he must snatch at the brief intervals allowed by his many infirmities. Naturally, he fell into many of the self-indulgent and troublesome ways of the valetudinarian. He was constantly wanting coffee, which seems to have soothed his headaches; and for this and his other wants he used to wear out the servants in his friends' houses by "frequent and frivolous errands." Yet he was apparently a kind master. His servants lived with him till they became friends, and he took care to pay so well the unfortunate servant whose sleep was broken by his calls, that she said that she would want no wages in a family where she had to wait upon Mr. Pope. Another form of self-indulgence was more injurious to himself. He pampered his appetite with highly-seasoned dishes, and liked to receive delicacies from his friends. His death was imputed by some of his friends, says Johnson, to "a silver saucepan in which it was his delight to eat potted lampreys." He would always get up for dinner, in spite of headache, when told that this delicacy was provided. Yet, as Johnson also observes, the excesses cannot have been very great, as they did not sooner cut short so fragile an existence. "Two bites and a sup more than your stint," says Swift, "will cost you more than others pay for a regular debauch.

At home, indeed, he appears to have been generally abstemious. Probably the habits of his parents' little household were very simple; and Pope, like Swift, knew the value of independence well enough to be systematically economical. Swift, indeed, had a more generous heart, and a lordly indifference to making money by his writings, which Pope, who owed his fortune chiefly to his Homer, did not attempt to rival. Swift alludes, in his letters, to an anecdote, which we may hope does not represent his habitual practice. Pope, it appears, was entertaining a couple of friends, and when four glasses had been consumed from a pint, retired, saying, "Gentlemen, I leave you to your wine." "I tell that story to everybody," says Swift, "in commendation of Mr. Pope's abstemiousness;" but he tells it, one may guess, with something of a rueful countenance. At times, however, it seems that Pope could give a "splendid dinner," and show no want of the "skill and elegance which such performances require." Pope, in fact, seems to have shown a combination of qualities which is not uncommon, though sometimes called inconsistent. He valued money as a man values it who has been poor and feels it essential to his comfort to be fairly beyond the reach of want, and was accordingly pretty sharp at making a bargain with a publisher or in arranging terms with a collaborator. But he could also be liberal on occasion.

Johnson says that his whole income amounted to about 800*l.* a year, out of which he professed himself able to assign 100*l.* to charity; and though the figures are doubtful, and all Pope's statements about his own proceedings liable to suspicion, he appears to have been often generous in helping the distressed with money, as well as with advice or recommendations to his powerful friends. Pope, by his infirmities and his talents, belonged to the dependent class of mankind. He was in no sense capable of standing firmly upon his own legs. He had a longing, sometimes pathetic and sometimes humiliating, for the applause of his fellows and the sympathy of friends. With feelings so morbidly sensitive, and with such a lamentable incapacity for straightforward openness in any relation of life, he was naturally a dangerous companion. He might be brooding over some fancied injury or neglect, and meditating revenge, when he appeared to be on good terms; when really desiring to do a service to a friend, he might adopt some tortuous means for obtaining his ends, which would convert the service into an injury; and, if he had once become alienated, the past friendship would be remembered by him as involving a kind of humiliation, and therefore supplying additional keenness to his resentment. And yet it is plain that throughout life he was always anxious to lean upon some stronger nature; to have a sturdy supporter whom he was apt to turn into an accomplice; or at least to have some good-natured, easy-going companion, in whose society he might find repose for his tortured nerves. And therefore, though the story of his friendships is unfortunately intertwined with the story of bitter quarrels and indefensible acts of treachery, it also reveals a touching desire for the kind of consolation which would be most valuable to one so accessible to the pettiest stings of his enemies. He had many warm friends, moreover, who, by good fortune or the exercise of unusual prudence, never excited his wrath, and whom he repaid by genuine affection. Some of these friendships have become famous, and will be best noticed in connexion with passages in his future career. It will be sufficient if I here notice a few names, in order to show that a complete picture of Pope's life, if it could now be produced, would include many figures of which we only catch occasional glimpses.

Pope, as I have said, though most closely connected with the Tories and Jacobites, disclaimed any close party connexion, and had some relations with the Whigs. Some courtesies even passed between him and the great Sir Robert Walpole, whose interest in literature was a vanishing quantity, and whose bitterest enemies were Pope's greatest friends. Walpole, however, as we have seen, asked for preferment for Pope's old friend, and Pope repaid him with more than one compliment. Thus, in the Epilogue to the Satires, he says,—

> "Seen him I have, but in his happier hour
> Of social pleasure, ill exchanged for power.
> Seen him, encumber'd with the venal tribe,
> Smile without art and win without a bribe."

Another Whig statesman for whom Pope seems to have entertained an especially warm regard was James Craggs, Addison's successor as Secretary of State, who died whilst under suspicion of peculation in the South Sea business (1721). The Whig connexion might have been turned to account. Craggs, during his brief tenure of office, offered Pope a pension of 300*l.* a year (from the secret service money), which Pope declined, whilst saying that, if in want of money, he would apply to Craggs as a friend. A negotiation of the same kind took place with Halifax, who aimed at the glory of being the great literary patron. It seems that he was anxious to have the Homer dedicated to him, and Pope, being unwilling to gratify him, or, as Johnson says, being less eager for money than Halifax for praise, sent a cool answer, and the negotiation passed off. Pope afterwards revenged himself for this offence by his bitter satire on Bufo in the *Prologue* to his *Satires*, though he had not the courage to admit its obvious application.

Pope deserves the credit of preserving his independence. He would not stoop low enough to take a pension at the price virtually demanded by the party in power. He was not, however, inaccessible to aristocratic blandishments, and was proud to be the valued and petted guest in many great houses. Through Swift he had become acquainted with Oxford, the colleague of Bolingbroke, and was a frequent and intimate guest of the second Earl, from whose servant Johnson derived the curious information as to his habits. Harcourt, Oxford's Chancellor, lent him a house whilst translating Homer. Sheffield, the Duke of Buckingham, had been an early patron, and after the duke's death, Pope, at the request of his eccentric duchess, the illegitimate daughter of James II., edited some of his works, and got into trouble for some Jacobite phrases contained in them. His most familiar friend among the opposition magnates was Lord Bathurst, a man of uncommon vivacity and good-humour. He was born four years before Pope, and died more than thirty years later, at the age of ninety-one. One of the finest passages in Burke's American speeches turns upon the vast changes which had taken place during Bathurst's lifetime. He lived to see his son Chancellor. Two years before his death the son left the father's dinner-table with some remark upon the advantage of regular habits. "Now the old gentleman's gone," said the lively youth of eighty-nine to the remaining guests, "let's crack the other bottle." Bathurst delighted in planting, and Pope in giving him advice, and in discussing the opening of vistas and erection of temples, and the poet was apt to be vexed when his advice was not taken.

Another friend, even more restless and comet-like in his appearances, was the famous Peterborough, the man who had seen more kings and postilions than any one in Europe; of whom Walsh injudiciously remarked that he had too much wit to be entrusted with the command of an army; and whose victories, soon after the unlucky remark had been made, were so brilliant as to resemble strategical epigrams. Pope seems to have been dazzled

by the amazing vivacity of the man, and has left a curious description of his last days. Pope found him on the eve of the voyage in which he died, sick of an agonising disease, crying out for pain at night, fainting away twice in the morning, lying like a dead man for a time, and in the intervals of pain giving a dinner to ten people, laughing, talking, declaiming against the corruption of the times, giving directions to his workmen, and insisting upon going to sea in a yacht without preparations for landing anywhere in particular. Pope seems to have been specially attracted by such men, with intellects as restless as his own, but with infinitely more vitality to stand the consequent wear and tear.

We should be better pleased if we could restore a vivid image of the inner circle upon which his happiness most intimately depended. In one relation of life Pope's conduct was not only blameless, but thoroughly loveable. He was, it is plain, the best of sons. Even here, it is true, he is a little too consciously virtuous. Yet when he speaks of his father and mother there are tears in his voice, and it is impossible not to recognize genuine warmth of heart.

> "Me let the tender office long engage
> To rock the cradle of reposing age,
> With lenient arts extend a mother's breath,
> Make languor smile, and soothe the bed of death,
> Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,
> And keep awhile one parent from the sky!" *

Such verses are a spring in the desert, a gush of the true feeling, which contrasts with the strained and factitious sentiment in his earlier rhetoric, and almost forces us to love the writer. Could Pope have preserved that higher mood, he would have held our affections as he often delights our intellect.

Unluckily we can catch but few glimpses of Pope's family life; of the old mother and father and the affectionate nurse, who lived with him till 1721, and died during a dangerous illness of his mother's. The father, of whom we hear little after his early criticism of the son's bad "rhymes," died in 1717; and a brief note to Martha Blount gives Pope's feelings as fully as many pages: "My poor father died last night. Believe, since I don't forget you this moment, I never shall." The mother survived till 1733, tenderly watched by Pope, who would never be long absent from her, and whose references to her are uniformly tender and beautiful. One or two of her letters are preserved. "My Deare,—A letter from your sister just now is come and gone, Mr. Mennock and Charls Rackitt, to take his leve of us: but being nothing in it, doe not send it. . . . Your sister is very well, but your brother is not. There's Mr. Blunt of Maypell Durom is dead, the same day that Mr. Inglefield died. My servis to Mrs. Blounts, and all that ask

* It is curious to compare these verses with the original copy contained in a letter to Aaron Hill. The comparison shows how skilfully Pope polished his most successful passages.

of me. I hope to hear from you, and that you are well, which is my dalye prayers; this with my blessing." The old lady had peculiar views of orthography; and Pope, it is said, gave her the pleasure of copying out some of his Homer, though the necessary corrections gave him and the printers more trouble than would be saved by such an amanuensis. Three days after her death he wrote to Richardson, the painter. "I thank God," he says, "her death was as easy as her life was innocent; and as it cost her not a groan, nor even a sigh, there is yet upon her countenance such an expression of tranquillity, nay, almost of pleasure, that it is even enviable to behold it. It would afford the finest image of a saint expired that ever painter drew, and it would be the greatest obligation which ever that obliging art could ever bestow upon a friend, if you would come and sketch it for me. I am sure if there be no very prevalent obstacle, you will leave any common business to do this, and I shall hope to see you this evening as late as you will, or to-morrow morning as early, before this winter flower is faded." Swift's comment, on hearing the news, gives the only consolation which Pope could have felt. "She died in extreme old age," he writes, "without pain, under the care of the most dutiful son I have ever known or heard of, which is a felicity not happening to one in a million." And with her death, its most touching and ennobling influence faded from Pope's life. There is no particular merit in loving a mother, but few biographies give a more striking proof that the loving discharge of a common duty may give a charm to a whole character. It is melancholy to add that we often have to appeal to this part of his story, to assure ourselves that Pope was really deserving of some affection.

The part of Pope's history which naturally follows brings us again to the region of unsolved mysteries. The one prescription which a spiritual physician would have suggested in Pope's case would have been the love of a good and sensible woman. A nature so capable of tender feeling and so essentially dependent upon others, might have been at once soothed and supported by a happy domestic life; though it must be admitted that it would have required no common qualifications in a wife to calm so irritable and jealous a spirit. Pope was unfortunate in his surroundings. The bachelor society of that day, not only the society of the Wycherleys and Cromwells, but the more virtuous society of Addison and his friends, was certainly not remarkable for any exalted tone about women. Bolingbroke, Peterborough, and Bathurst, Pope's most admired friends, were all more or less flagrantly licentious; and Swift's mysterious story shows that if he could love a woman, his love might be as dangerous as hatred. In such a school, Pope, eminently malleable to the opinions of his companions, was not likely to acquire a high standard of sentiment. His personal defects were equally against him. His frame was not adapted for the robust gallantry of the time. He wanted a nurse rather than a wife; and if his infirmities might excite pity, pity is akin to contempt as well as to love. The poor little invalid, brutally

abused for his deformity by such men as Dennis and his friends, was stung beyond all self-control by their coarse laughter, and by the consciousness that it only echoed, in a more brutal shape, the judgment of the fine ladies of the time. His language about women, sometimes expressing coarse contempt and sometimes rising to ferocity, is the reaction of his morbid sensibility under such real and imagined scorn.

Such feelings must be remembered in speaking briefly of two love affairs, if they are such, which profoundly affected his happiness. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu is amongst the most conspicuous figures of the time. She had been made a toast at the Kitcat Club at the age of eight, and she translated Epictetus (from the Latin) before she was twenty. She wrote verses, some of them amazingly coarse, though decidedly clever, and had married Mr. Edward Wortley Montagu in defiance of her father's will, though even in this, her most romantic proceeding, there are curious indications of a respect for prudential considerations. Her husband was a friend of Addison's, and a Whig; and she accompanied him on an embassy to Constantinople in 1716–17, where she wrote the excellent letters published after her death, and whence she imported the practice of inoculation, in spite of much opposition. A distinguished leader of society, she was also a woman of shrewd intellect and masculine character. In 1739 she left her husband, though no quarrel preceded or followed the separation, and settled for many years in Italy. Her letters are characteristic of the keen woman of the world, with an underlying vein of nobler feeling, perverted by harsh experience into a prevailing cynicism. Pope had made her acquaintance before she left England. He wrote poems to her and corrected her verses till she cruelly refused his services, on the painfully plausible ground that he would claim all the good for himself and leave all the bad for her. They corresponded during her first absence abroad. The common sense is all on the lady's side, whilst Pope puts on his most elaborate manners and addresses her in the strained compliments of old-fashioned gallantry. He acts the lover, though it is obviously mere acting, and his language is stained by indelicacies, which could scarcely offend Lady Mary, if we may judge her by her own poetical attempts. The most characteristic of Pope's letters related to an incident at Stanton Harcourt. Two rustic lovers were surprised by a thunder-storm in a field near the house; they were struck by lightning, and found lying dead in each other's arms. Here was an admirable chance for Pope, who was staying in the house with his friend Gay. He wrote off a beautiful letter to Lady Mary,* descriptive of the event —a true prose pastoral in the Strephon and Chloe style. He got

* Pope, after his quarrel, wanted to sink his previous intimacy with Lady Mary, and printed this letter as addressed by Gay to Fortescue, adding one to the innumerable mystifications of his correspondence. Mr. Moy Thomas doubts also whether Lady Mary's answer was really sent at the assigned date. The contrast of sentiment is equally characteristic in any case.

Lord Harcourt to erect a monument over the common grave of the lovers, and composed a couple of epitaphs, which he submitted to Lady Mary's opinion. She replied by a cruel dose of common sense, and a doggerel epitaph, which turned his fine phrases into merciless ridicule. If the lovers had been spared, she suggests, the first year might probably have seen a beaten wife and a deceived husband, cursing their marriage chain.

> "Now they are happy in their doom,
> For Pope has writ upon their tomb."

On Lady Mary's return the intimacy was continued. She took a house at Twickenham. He got Kneller to paint her portrait, and wrote letters expressive of humble adoration. But the tone which did well enough when the pair were separated by the whole breadth of Europe, was less suitable when they were in the same parish. After a time the intimacy faded and changed into mutual antipathy. The specific cause of the quarrel, if cause there was, has not been clearly revealed. One account, said to come from Lady Mary, is at least not intrinsically* improbable. According to this story, the unfortunate poet forgot for a moment that he was a contemptible cripple, and forgot also the existence of Mr. Edward Wortley Montagu, and a passionate declaration of love drew from the lady an "immoderate fit of laughter." Ever afterwards, it is added, he was her implacable enemy. Doubtless, if the story be true, Lady Mary acted like a sensible woman of the world, and Pope was silly as well as immoral. And yet one cannot refuse some pity to the unfortunate wretch, thus roughly jerked back into the consciousness that a fine lady might make a pretty plaything of him, but could not seriously regard him with anything but scorn. Whatever the precise facts, a breach of some sort might have been anticipated. A game of gallantry in which the natural parts are inverted, and the gentleman acts the sentimentalist to the lady's performance of the shrewd cynic, is likely to have awkward results. Pope brooded over his resentment, and years afterwards took a revenge only too characteristic. The first of his imitations of Horace appeared in 1733. It contained a couplet, too gross for quotation, making the most outrageous imputation upon the character of "Sappho." Now, the accusation itself had no relation whatever either to facts or even (as I suppose) to any existing scandal. It was simply throwing filth at random. Thus, when Lady Mary took it to herself, and applied to Pope through Peterborough for an explanation, Pope could make a defence verbally impregnable. There was no reaaon why Lady Mary should fancy that such a cap fitted; and it was far more appropriate, as he added, to other women notorious for immorality as

* Mr. Moy Thomas, in his edition of Lady Mary's letters, considers this story to be merely an echo of old scandal, and makes a different conjecture as to the immediate cause of quarrel. His conjecture seems very improbable to me; but the declaration story is clearly of very doubtful authenticity.

well as authorship. In fact, however, there can be no doubt that Pope intended his abuse to reach its mark. Sappho was an obvious name for the most famous of poetic ladies. Pope himself, in one of his last letters to her, says that fragments of her writing would please him like fragments of Sappho's; and their mediator, Peterborough, writes of her under the same name in some complimentary and once well-known verses to Mrs. Howard. Pope had himself alluded to her as Sappho in some verses addressed (about 1722) to another lady, Judith Cowper, afterwards Mrs. Madan, who was for a time the object of some of his artificial gallantry. The only thing that can be said is that his abuse was a sheer piece of Billingsgate, too devoid of plausibility to be more than an expression of virulent hatred. He was like a dirty boy who throws mud from an ambush, and declares that he did not see the victim be-spattered.*

A bitter and humiliating quarrel followed. Lord Hervey, who had been described as "Lord Fanny," in the same satire, joined with his friend, Lady Mary, in writing lampoons upon Pope. The best known was a copy of verses, chiefly, if not exclusively, by Lady Mary, in which Pope is brutally taunted with the personal deformities of his "wretched little carcase," which, it seems, are the only cause of his being "unwhipt, unblanketed, unkicked." One verse seems to have stung him more deeply, which says that his "crabbed numbers" are

"Hard as his heart and as his birth obscure."

To this and other assaults Pope replied by a long letter, suppressed, however, for the time, which, as Johnson says exhibits to later readers "nothing but tedious malignity," and is in fact, a careful raking together of everything likely to give pain to his victim. It was not published till 751, when both Pope and Hervey were dead. In his later writings he made references to Sappho, which fixed the name upon her, and amongst other pleasant insinuations, speaks of a weakness which she shared with Dr. Johnson —an inadequate appreciation of clean linen. More malignant accusations are implied both in his acknowledged and anonymous writings. The most ferocious of all his assaults, however, is the character of Sporus, that is, Lord Hervey, in the epistle to Arbuthnot, where he seems to be actually screaming with malignant fury. He returns the taunts as to effeminacy, and calls his adversary a "mere white curd of asses' milk,"—an innocent drink, which he was himself in the habit of consuming.

* Another couplet in the second book of the *Dunciad* about "hapless Monsieur" and "Lady Maries," was also applied at the time to Lady M. W. Montagu: and Pope in a later note affects to deny, thus really pointing the allusion. But the obvious meaning of the whole passage is that "duchesses and Lady Maries" might be personated by abandoned women, which would certainly be unpleasant for them, but does not imply any imputation upon their character. If Lady Mary was really the author of a "Pop upon Pope"—a story of Pope's supposed whipping in the vein of his own attack upon Dennis, she already considered him as the author of some scandal. The line in the *Dunciad* was taken to allude to a story about a M. Rémond which has been fully cleared up.

We turn gladly from these miserable hostilities, disgraceful to all concerned. Were any excuse available for Pope, it would be in the brutality of taunts, coming not only from the rough dwellers in Grub-street, but from the most polished representatives of the highest classes, upon personal defects, which the most ungenerous assailants might surely have spared. But it must also be granted that Pope was neither the last to give provocation, nor at all inclined to refrain from the use of poisoned weapons.

The other connexion of which I have spoken has also its mystery—like everything else in Pope's career. Pope had been early acquainted with Teresa and Martha Blount. Teresa was born in the same year as Pope. and Martha two years later.* They were daughters of Lister Blount, of Mapledurham; and after his death, in 1710, and the marriage of their only brother, in 1711, they lived with their mother in London, and passed much of the summer near Twickenham. They seem to have been lively young women who had been educated at Paris. Teresa was the most religious, and the greatest lover of London society. I have already quoted a passage or two from the early letters addressed to the two sisters. It has also to be said that he was guilty of writing to them stuff which it is inconceivable that any decent man should have communicated to a modest woman. They do not seem to have taken offence. He professes himself the slave of both alternately or together. "Even from my infancy," he says (in 1714), "I have been in love with one or other of you week by week, and my journey to Bath fell out in the 376th week of the reign of my sovereign lady Sylvia. At the present writing hereof, it is the 389th week of the reign of your most serene majesty, in whose service I was listed some weeks before I beheld your sister." He had suggested to Lady Mary that the concluding lines of *Eloisa* contained a delicate compliment to her; and he characteristically made a similar insinuation to Martha Blount about the same passage. Pope was decidedly an economist even of his compliments. Some later letters are in less artificial language, and there is a really touching and natural letter to Teresa in regard to an illness of her sister's. After a time, we find that some difficulty has arisen. He feels that his presence gives pain; when he comes he either makes her (apparently Teresa) uneasy, or he sees her unkind. Teresa, it would seem, is jealous, and disapproves of his attentions to Martha. In the midst of this we find that in 1717 Pope settled an annuity upon Teresa of 40*l.* a year for six years, on condition of her not being married during that time. The fact has suggested various speculations, but was, perhaps, only a part of some family arrangement, made convenient by the diminished fortunes of the ladies. Whatever the history, Pope gradually became attached to Martha, and simultaneously came to regard Teresa with antipathy. Martha, in

* The statements as to the date of the acquaintance are contradictory. Martha told Spence that she first knew Pope as a "very little girl," but added that it was after the publication of the *Essay on Criticism*, when she was twenty-one; and at another time, that it was after he had begun the Iliad, which was later than part of the published correspondence.

fact, became by degrees almost a member of his household. His correspondents take for granted that she is his regular companion. He writes of her to Gay, in 1730, as "a friend—a woman friend, God help me!—with whom I have spent three or four hours a day these fifteen years." In his last years, when he was most dependent upon kindness, he seems to have expected that she should be invited to any house which he was himself to visit. Such a close connexion naturally caused some scandal. In 1725 he defends himself against "villanous lying tales" of this kind to his old friend Caryll, with whom the Blounts were connected. At the same time he is making bitter complaints of Teresa. He accused her afterwards (1729) of having an intrigue with a married man, of "striking, pinching, and abusing her mother to the utmost shamefulness." The mother, he thinks, is too meek to resent this tyranny, and Martha, as it appears, refuses to believe the reports against her sister. Pope audaciously suggests that it would be a good thing if the mother could be induced to retire to a convent, and is anxious to persuade Martha to leave so painful a home. The same complaints reappear in many letters, but the position remained unaltered. It is impossible to say with any certainty what may have been the real facts. Pope's mania for suspicion deprives his suggestions of the slightest value. The only inference to be drawn is that he drew closer to Martha Blount as years went by, and was anxious that she should become independent of her family. This naturally led to mutual dislike and suspicion, but nobody can now say whether Teresa pinched her mother, nor what would have been her account of Martha's relations to Pope.

Johnson repeats a story that Martha neglected Pope "with shameful unkindness," in his later years. It is clearly exaggerated or quite unfounded. At any rate, the poor sickly man, in his premature and childless old age, looked up to her with fond affection and left to her nearly the whole of his fortune. His biographers have indulged in discussions—surely superfluous—as to the morality of the connexion. There is no question of seduction, or of tampering with the affections of an innocent woman. Pope was but too clearly disqualified from acting the part of Lothario. There was not in his case any Vanessa to give a tragic turn to the connexion, which otherwise resembled Swift's connexion with Stella. Miss Blount, from all that appears, was quite capable of taking care of herself, and, had she wished for marriage, need only have intimated her commands to her lover. It is probable enough that, the relations between them led to very unpleasant scenes in her family; but she did not suffer otherwise in accepting Pope's attentions. The probability seems to be that the friendship had become imperceptibly closer, and that what began as an idle affectation of gallantry was slowly changed into a devoted attachment, but not until Pope's health was so broken that marriage would then, if not always, have appeared to be a mockery.

Poets have a bad reputation as husbands. Strong passions and keen sensibilities may easily disqualify a man for domestic

tranquillity, and prompt a revolt against rules essential to social welfare. Pope, like other poets from Shakspeare to Shelley, was unfortunate in his love affairs; but his ill-fortune took a characteristic shape. He was not carried away, like Byron and Burns, by overpowering passions. Rather the emotional power which lay in his nature was prevented from displaying itself by his physical infirmities, and his strange trickiness and morbid irritability. A man who could not make tea without a stratagem, could hardly be a downright lover. We may imagine that he would at once make advances and retract them; that he would be intolerably touchy and suspicious; that every coolness would be interpreted as a deliberate insult, and that the slightest hint would be enough to set his jealousy in a flame. A woman would feel that, whatever his genius and his genuine kindliness, one thing was impossible with him—that is, a real confidence in his sincerity; and therefore, on the whole, it may, perhaps, be reckoned as a piece of good fortune for the most wayward and excitable of sane mankind that, if he never fully gained the most essential condition of all human happiness, he yet formed a deep and lasting attachment to a woman who, more or less, returned his feeling. In a life so full of bitterness, so harassed by physical pain, one is glad to think, even whilst admitting that the suffering was in great part foolish self-torture, and in part inflicted as a retribution for injuries to others, that some glow of feminine kindliness might enlighten the dreary stages of his progress through life. The years left to him after the death of his mother were few and evil, and it would be hard to grudge him such consolation as he could receive from the glances of Patty Blount's blue eyes—the eyes which, on Walpole's testimony, were the last remains of her beauty.

CHAPTER V.

THE WAR WITH THE DUNCES.

In the *Dunciad*, published soon after the Odyssey, Pope laments ten years spent as a commentator and translator. He was not without compensation. The drudgery—for the latter part of his task must have been felt as drudgery—once over, he found himself in a thoroughly independent position, still on the right side of forty, and able to devote his talents to any task which might please him. The task which he actually chose was not calculated to promote his happiness. We must look back to an earlier period to explain its history. During the last years of Queen Anne, Pope had belonged to a "little senate" in which Swift was the chief figure. Though Swift did not exercise either so gentle or so imperial a sway as Addison, the cohesion between the more independent members of this rival clique was strong and lasting. They amused themselves by projecting the Scriblerus Club, a body which never had, it would seem, any definite organization, but was held to exist for the prosecution of a design never fully executed. Martinus Scriblerus was the name of an imaginary pedant—a precursor and relative of Dr. Dryasdust—whose memoirs and works were to form a satire upon stupidity in the guise of learning. The various members of the club were to share in the compilation; and if such joint-stock undertakings were practicable in literature, it would be difficult to collect a more brilliant set of contributors. After Swift—the terrible humourist of whom we can hardly think without a mixture of horror and compassion—the chief members were Atterbury, Arbuthnot, Gay, Parnell, and Pope himself. Parnell, an amiable man, died in 1717, leaving works which were edited by Pope in 1722. Atterbury, a potential Wolsey or Laud born in an uncongenial period, was a man of fine literary taste—a warm admirer of Milton (though he did exhort Pope to put *Samson Agonistes* into civilised costume—one of the most unlucky suggestions ever made by mortal man), a judicious critic of Pope himself, and one who had already given proofs of his capacity in literary warfare by his share in the famous controversy with Bentley. Though no one now doubts the measureless superiority of Bentley, the clique of Swift and Pope still cherished the belief that the wit of Atterbury and his allies had triumphed over the ponderous learning of the pedant. Arbuthnot, whom Swift had introduced to Pope as a man who could do everything but walk, was an amiable

and accomplished physician. He was a strong Tory and High-Churchman, and retired for a time to France upon the death of Anne and the overthrow of his party. He returned, however, to England, resumed his practice, and won Pope's warmest gratitude by his skill and care. He was a man of learning, and had employed it in an attack upon Woodward's geological speculations, as already savouring of heterodoxy. He possessed also a vein of genuine humour, resembling that of Swift, though it has rather lost its savour, perhaps, because it was not salted by the Dean's misanthropic bitterness. If his good humour weakened his wit, it gained him the affections of his friends, and was never soured by the sufferings of his later years. Finally, John Gay, though fat, lazy, and wanting in manliness of spirit, had an illimitable flow of good-tempered banter; and if he could not supply the learning of Arbuthnot, he could give what was more valuable, touches of fresh natural simplicity, which still explain the liking of his friends. Gay, as Johnson says, was the general favourite of the wits, though a playfellow rather than a partner, and treated with more fondness than respect. Pope seems to have loved him better than any one, and was probably soothed by his easy-going, unsuspicious temper. They were of the same age; and Gay, who had been apprenticed to a linen-draper, managed to gain notice by his poetical talents, and was taken up by various great people. Pope said to him that he wanted independence of spirit, which is indeed obvious enough. He would have been a fitting inmate of Thomson's Castle of Indolence. He was one of those people who consider that Providence is bound to put food into their mouths without giving them any trouble; and, as sometimes happens, his draft upon the general system of things was honoured. He was made comfortable by various patrons; the Duchess of Queensberry petted him in his later years, and the duke kept his money for him. His friends chose to make a grievance of the neglect of Government to add to his comfort by a good place; they encouraged him to refuse the only place offered as not sufficiently dignified; and he even became something of a martyr when his *Polly*, a sequel to the *Beggars' Opera*, was prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain, and a good subscription made him ample amends. Pope has immortalised the complaint by lamenting the fate of "neglected genius" in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, and declaring that the "sole return" of all Gay's "blameless life" was

"My verse and Queensberry weeping o'er thy urn."

Pope's alliance with Gay had various results. Gay continued the war with Ambrose Philips by writing burlesque pastorals, of which Johnson truly says that they show "the effect of reality and truth, even when the intention was to show them grovelling and degraded." They may still be glanced at with pleasure. Soon after the publication of the mock pastorals, the two friends, in company with Arbuthnot, had made an adventure more in the spirit of the Scriblerus Club. A farce called *Three Hours after*

Marriage was produced and damned in 1717. It was intended (amongst other things) to satirise Pope's old enemy Dennis, called "Sir Tremendous," as an embodiment of pedantic criticism, and Arbuthnot's old antagonist Woodward. A taste for fossils, mummies or antiquities was at that time regarded as a fair butt for unsparing ridicule; but the three great wits managed their assault so clumsily as to become ridiculous themselves; and Pope, as we shall presently see, smarted as usual under failure.

After Swift's retirement to Ireland, and during Pope's absorption in Homer, the Scriblerus Club languished. Some fragments, however, of the great design were executed by the four chief members, and the dormant project was revived, after Pope had finished his Homer, on occasion of the last two visits of Swift to England. He passed six months in England, from March to August, 1726, and had brought with him the MS. of Gulliver's Travels, the greatest satire produced by the Scriblerians. He passed a great part of his time at Twickenham, and in rambling with Pope or Gay about the country. Those who do not know how often the encounter of brilliant wits tends to neutralise rather than stimulate their activity, may wish to have been present at a dinner which took place at Twickenham on July 6, 1726, when the party was made up of Pope, the most finished poet of the day; Swift, the deepest humourist; Bolingbroke, the most brilliant politician; Congreve, the wittiest writer of comedy; and Gay, the author of the most successful burlesque. The envious may console themselves by thinking that Pope very likely went to sleep, that Swift was deaf and overbearing, that Congreve and Bolingbroke were painfully witty, and Gay frightened into silence. When, in 1727, Swift again visited England, and stayed at Twickenham, the clouds were gathering. The scene is set before us in some of Swift's verses:—

> "Pope has the talent well to speak,
> But not to reach the ear;
> His loudest voice is low and weak,
> The dean too deaf to her.
>
> "Awhile they on each other look,
> Then different studies choose;
> The dean sits plodding o'er a book,
> Pope walks and courts the muse."

"Two sick friends," says Swift in a letter written after his return to Ireland, "never did well together." It is plain that their infirmities had been mutually trying, and on the last day of August Swift suddenly withdrew from Twickenham, in spite of Pope's entreaties. He had heard of the last illness of Stella, which was finally to crush his happiness. Unable to endure the company of friends, he went to London in very bad health, and thence, after a short stay, to Ireland, leaving behind him a letter which, says Pope, "affected me so much that it made me like a girl." It was

a gloomy parting, and the last. The stern Dean retired to die "like a poisoned rat in a hole," after long years of bitterness, and finally of slow intellectual decay. He always retained perfect confidence in his friend's affection. Poor Pope, as he says in the verses on his own death,—

> "Will grieve a month, and Gay
> A week, and Arbuthnot a day;"

and they were the only friends to whom he attributes sincere sorrow.

Meanwhile two volumes of *Miscellanies*, the joint work of the four wits, appeared in June, 1727; and a third in March, 1728. A fourth, hastily got up, was published in 1732. They do not appear to have been successful. The copyright of the three volumes was sold for 225*l.*, of which Arbuthnot and Gay received each 50*l.*, whilst the remainder was shared between Pope and Swift; and Swift seems to have given his part, according to his custom, to the widow of a respectable Dublin bookseller. Pope's correspondence with the publisher shows that he was entrusted with the financial details, and arranged them with the sharpness of a practised man of business. The whole collection was made up in great part of old scraps, and savoured of book-making, though Pope speaks complacently of the joint volumes, in which he says to Swift, "We look like friends, side by side, serious and merry by turns, conversing interchangeably, and walking down, hand in hand, to posterity." Of the various fragments contributed by Pope, there is only one which need be mentioned here—the treatise on Bathos in the third volume, in which he was helped by Arbuthnot. He told Swift privately that he had "entirely methodised and in a manner written it all," though he afterwards chose to denounce the very same statement as a lie when the treatise brought him into trouble. It is the most amusing of his prose writings, consisting essentially of a collection of absurdities from various authors, with some apparently invented for the occasion, such as the familiar

> "Ye gods, annihilate but space and time,
> And make two lovers happy!"

and ending with the ingenious receipt to make an epic poem. Most of the passages ridiculed—and, it must be said, very deservedly—were selected from some of the various writers to whom, for one reason or another, he owed a grudge. Ambrose Philips and Dennis, his old enemies, and Theobald, who had criticised his edition of Shakspeare, supply several illustrations. Blackmore had spoken very strongly of the immorality of the wits in some prose essays; Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, and a parody of the first psalm, anonymously circulated, but known to be Pope's, had been severely condemned; and Pope took a cutting revenge by plentiful citations from Blackmore's most ludicrous bombast; and even Broome, his

colleague in Homer, came in for a passing stroke, for Broome and Pope were now at enmity. Finally, Pope fired a general volley into the whole crowd of bad authors by grouping them under the head of various animals—tortoises, parrots, frogs, and so forth—and adding under each head the initials of the persons described. He had the audacity to declare that the initials were selected at random. If so, a marvellous coincidence made nearly every pair of letters correspond to the name and surname of some contemporary poetaster. The classification was rather vague, but seems to have given special offence.

Meanwhile Pope was planning a more elaborate campaign against his adversaries. He now appeared for the first time as a formal satirist, and the *Dunciad*, in which he came forward as the champion of Wit, taken in its broad sense, against its natural antithesis, Dulness, is in some respects his masterpiece. It is addressed to Swift, who probably assisted at some of its early stages. O thou, exclaims the poet—

> "O thou, whatever title please thine ear,
> Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff, or Gulliver!
> Whether thou choose Cervantes' serious air,
> Or laugh and shake in Rabelais's easy-chair—"

And we feel that Swift is present in spirit throughout the composition. "The great fault of the *Dunciad*," says Warton, an intelligent and certainly not an over-severe critic, "is the excessive vehemence of the satire. It has been compared," he adds, "to the geysers propelling a vast column of boiling water by the force of subterranean fire;" and he speaks of some one who, after reading a book of the *Dunciad*, always soothes himself by a canto of the *Faery Queen*. Certainly a greater contrast could not easily be suggested; and yet I think that the remark requires at least modification. The *Dunciad*, indeed, is beyond all question, full of coarse abuse. The second book, in particular, illustrates that strange delight in the physically disgusting which Johnson notices as characteristic of Pope and his master, Swift. In the letter prefixed to the *Dunciad*, Pope tries to justify his abuse of his enemies by the example of Boileau, whom he appears to have considered as his great prototype. But Boileau would have been revolted by the brutal images which Pope does not hesitate to introduce; and it is a curious phenomenon that the poet who is pre-eminently the representative of polished society should openly take such pleasure in unmixed filth. Polish is sometimes very thin. It has been suggested that Swift, who was with Pope during the composition, may have been directly responsible for some of these brutalities. At any rate, as I have said, Pope has here been working in the Swift spirit, and this gives, I think, the key-note of his *Dunciad*.

The geyser comparison is so far misleading that Pope is not in his most spiteful mood. There is not that infusion of personal venom which appears so strongly in the character of Sporus and similar passages. In reading them we feel that the poet is writhing

under some bitter mortification, and trying with concentrated malice to sting his adversary in the tenderest places. We hear a tortured victim screaming out the shrillest taunts at his tormentor. The abuse in the *Dunciad* is by comparison broad and even jovial. The tone at which Pope is aiming is that suggested by the "laughing and shaking in Rabelais's easy-chair." It is meant to be a boisterous guffaw from capacious lungs, an enormous explosion of superlative contempt for the mob of stupid thick-skinned scribblers. They are to be overwhelmed with gigantic cachinnations, ducked in the dirtiest of drains, rolled over and over with rough horse-play, pelted with the least savoury of rotten eggs, not skilfully anatomised or pierced with dexterously directed needles. Pope has really stood by too long, watching their tiresome antics and receiving their taunts, and he must, once for all, speak out and give them a lesson.

> "Out with it Dunciad! let the secret pass,
> That secret to each fool—that he's an ass!"

That is his account of his feelings in the prologue to the *Satires*, and he answers the probable remonstrance.

> "You think this cruel? Take it for a rule,
> No creature smarts so little as a fool."

To reconcile us to such laughter, it should have a more genial tone than Pope could find in his nature. We ought too feel, and we certainly do not feel, that after the joke has been fired off there should be some possibility of reconciliation, or, at least, we should find some recognition of the fact that the victims are not to be hated simply because they were not such clever fellows as Pope. There is something cruel in Pope's laughter, as in Swift's. The missiles are not mere filth, but are weighted with hard materials that bruise and mangle, He professes that his enemies were the first aggressors, a plea which can be only true in part; and he defends himself, feebly enough, against the obvious charge that he has ridiculed men for being obscure, poor, and stupid—faults not to be amended by satire, nor rightfully provocative of enmity. In fact, Pope knows in his better moments that a man is not necessarily wicked because he sleeps on a bulk, or writes verses in a garret; but he also knows that to mention those facts will give his enemies pain, and he cannot refrain from the use of so handy a weapon.

Such faults make one half ashamed of confessing to reading the *Dunciad* with pleasure; and yet it is frequently written with such force and freedom that we half pardon the cruel little persecutor, and admire the vigour with which he throws down the gauntlet to the natural enemies of genius. The *Dunciad* is modelled upon the Mac Flecknoe, in which Dryden celebrates the appointment of Elkanah Shadwell to succeed Flecknoe as monarch of the realms of Dulness, and describes the coronation ceremonies. Pope imitates many passages, and adopts the general design. Though he does not equal the vigour of some of Dryden's lines, and wages

war in a more ungenerous spirit, the *Dunciad* has a wider scope than its original, and shows Pope's command of his weapons in occasional felicitous phrases, in the vigour of the versification, and in the general sense of form and clear presentation of the scene imagined. For a successor to the great empire of Dulness he chose (in the original form of the poem) the unlucky Theobald, a writer to whom the merit is attributed of having first illustrated Shakspeare by a study of the contemporary literature. In doing this he had fallen foul of Pope, who could claim no such merit for his own editorial work, and Pope, therefore, regarded him as a grovelling antiquarian. As such, he was a fit pretender enough to the throne once occupied by Settle. The *Dunciad* begins by a spirited description of the goddess brooding in her cell upon the eve of a Lord Mayor's day, when the proud scene was o'er,

> "But lived in Settle's numbers one day more."

The predestined hero is meanwhile musing in his Gothic library, and addresses a solemn invocation to Dulness, who accepts his sacrifice—a pile of his own works—transports him to her temple, and declares him to be the legitimate successor to the former rulers of her kingdom. The second book describes the games held in honour of the new ruler. Some of them are, as a frank critic observes, "beastly;" but a brief report of the least objectionable may serve as a specimen of the whole performance. Dulness, with her court, descends

> "To where Fleet Ditch with disemboguing streams
> Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames,
> The king of dykes than whom no sluice of mud
> With deeper stable blots the silver flood.—
> Here strip, my children, here at once leap in;
> Here prove who best can dash through thick and thin,
> And who the most in love of dirt excel."

And certainly, by the poet's account, they all love it as well as their betters. The competitors in this contest are drawn from the unfortunates immersed in what Warburton calls "the common sink of all such writers (as Ralph)—a political newspaper." They were all hateful, partly because they were on the side of Walpole, and therefore, by Pope's logic, unprincipled hirelings, and more, because in that cause, as others, they had assaulted Pope and his friend. There is Oldmixon, a hack writer employed in compilations, who accused Atterbury of falsifying Clarendon, and was accused of himself falsifying historical documents in the interests of Whiggism; and Smedley, an Irish clergyman, a special enemy of Swift's, who had just printed a collection of assaults upon the miscellanies called Gulliveriana; and Concanen, another Irishman, an ally of Theobald's, and (it may be noted) of Warburton's, who attacked the *Bathos*, and received—of course, for the worst services—an appointment in Jamaica; and Arnall, one of Walpole's most favoured

journalists, who was said to have received for himself or others near 11,000*l.* in four years. Each dives in a way supposed to be characteristic, Oldmixon with the pathetic exclamation,

> "And am I now threescore?
> Ah, why, ye gods, should two and two make four?"

Concanen, "a cold, long-winded native of the deep," dives perseveringly, but without causing a ripple in the stream:

> "Not so bold Arnall—with a weight of skull
> Furious he dives, precipitately dull,"

and ultimately emerges to claim the prize, "with half the bottom on his head." But Smedley, who has been given up for lost, comes up,

> "Shaking the horrors of his sable brows,"

and relates how he has been sucked in by the mud-nymphs, and how they have shown him a branch of Styx which here pours into the Thames, and diffuses its soporific vapours over the temple and its purlieus. He is solemnly welcomed by Milbourn (a reverend antagonist of Dryden), who tells him to "receive these robes which once were mine,"

> "Dulness is sacred in a sound divine."

The games are concluded in the second book; and in the third the hero, sleeping in the Temple of Dulness, meets in a vision the ghost of Settle, who reveals to him the future of his empire; tells how Dulness is to overspread the world, and revive the triumphs of Goths and monks; how the hated Dennis, and Gildon, and others, are to overwhelm scorners, and set up at court, and preside over arts and sciences, though a fit of temporary sanity causes him to give a warning to the deists—

> "But learn, ye dunces! not to scorn your God—"

and how posterity is to witness the decay of the stage, under a deluge of silly farce, opera, and sensation dramas; how bad architects are to deface the works of Wren and Inigo Jones; whilst the universities and public schools are to be given up to games and idleness, and the birch is to be abolished.

Fragments of the prediction have not been entirely falsified, though the last couplet intimates a hope:

> "Enough! enough! the raptured monarch cries,
> And through the ivory gate the vision flies."

The *Dunciad* was thus a declaration of war against the whole tribe of scribblers; and, like other such declarations, it brought more consequences than Pope foresaw. It introduced Pope to a very dangerous line of conduct. Swift had written to Pope in

1725: "Take care that the bad poets do not outwit you, as they have served the good ones in every age, whom they have provoked to transmit their names to posterity;" and the *Dunciad* has been generally censured from Swift's point of view. Satire, it is said, is wasted upon such insignificant persons. To this Pope might have replied, with some plausibility, that the interest of satire must always depend upon its internal qualities, not upon our independent knowledge of its object. Though Gildon and Arnall are forgotten, the type "dunce" is eternal. The warfare, however, was demoralising in another sense. Whatever may have been the injustice of Pope's attacks upon individuals, the moral standard of the Grub-street population was far from exalted. The poor scribbler had too many temptations to sell himself, and to evade the occasional severity of the laws of libel by humiliating contrivances. Moreover, the uncertainty of the law of copyright encouraged the lower class of booksellers to undertake all kinds of piratical enterprises, and to trade in various ways upon the fame of well-known authors, by attributing trash to them, or purloining and publishing what the authors would have suppressed. Dublin was to London what New York is now, and successful books were at once reproduced in Ireland. Thus the lower strata of the literary class frequently practised with impunity all manner of more or less discreditable trickery, and Pope, with his morbid propensity for mystification, was only too apt a pupil in such arts. Though the tone of his public utterances was always of the loftiest, he was like a civilized commander who, in carrying on a war with savages, finds it convenient to adopt the practices which he professes to disapprove.

The whole publication of the *Dunciad* was surrounded with tricks, intended partly to evade possible consequences, and partly to excite public interest, or to cause amusement at the expense of the bewildered victims. Part of the plot was concerted with Swift, who, however, does not appear to have been quite in the secret. The complete poem was intended to appear with an elaborate mock commentary by Scriblerus, explaining some of the allusions and with "proeme, prolegomena, testimonia scriptorum, index auctorum, and notæ variorum." In the first instance, however, it appeared in a mangled form without this burlesque apparatus or the lines to Swift. Four editions were issued in this form in 1728, and with a mock notice from the publisher, expressing a hope that the author would be provoked to give a more perfect edition. This, accordingly, appeared in 1729. Pope seems to have been partly led to this device by a principle which he avowed to Warburton. When he had anything specially sharp to say he kept it for a second edition, where it would, he thought, pass with less offence. But he may also have been under the impression that all the mystery of apparently spurious editions would excite public curiosity. He adopted other devices for avoiding unpleasant consequences. It was possible that his victims might appeal to the law. In order to throw dust in their eyes, two editions appeared in Dublin and London—the Dublin edition

professing to be a reprint from a London edition, whilst the London edition professed in the same way to be the reprint of a Dublin edition. To oppose another obstacle to prosecutors, he assigned the *Dunciad* to three noblemen—Lords Bathurst, Burlington, and Oxford—who transferred their right to Pope's publisher. Pope would be sheltered behind these responsible persons, and an aggrieved person might be slower to attack persons of high position and property. By yet another device Pope applied for an injunction in Chancery to suppress a piratical London edition; but ensured the failure of his application by not supplying the necessary proofs of property. This trick, repeated, as we shall see, on another occasion, was intended either to shirk responsibility or to increase the notoriety of the book. A further mystification was equally characteristic. To the *Dunciad* in its enlarged form is prefixed a letter, really written by Pope himself, but praising his morality and genius, and justifying his satire in terms which would have been absurd in Pope's own mouth. He therefore induced a Major Cleland, a retired officer of some position, to put his name to the letter, which it is possible that he may have partly written. The device was transparent, and only brought ridicule upon its author. Finally, Pope published an account of the publication in the name of Savage, known by Johnson's biography, who seems to have been a humble ally of the great man—at once a convenient source of information and a tool for carrying on this underground warfare. Pope afterwards incorporated this statement—which was meant to prove, by some palpable falsehoods, that the dunces had not been the aggressors—in his own notes, without Savage's name. This labyrinth of unworthy devices was more or less visible to Pope's antagonists. It might in some degree be excusable as a huge practical joke, absurdly elaborate for the purpose, but it led Pope into some slippery ways, where no such excuse is available.

Pope, says Johnson, contemplated his victory over the dunces with great exultation. Through his mouth-piece, Savage, he described the scene on the day of publication: how a crowd of authors besieged the shop and threatened him with violence; how the booksellers and hawkers struggled with small success for copies; how the dunces formed clubs to devise measures of retaliation; how one wrote to ministers to denounce Pope as a traitor, and another brought an image in clay to execute him in effigy; and how successive editions, genuine and spurious, followed each other, distinguished by an owl or an ass on the frontispiece, and provoking infinite controversy amongst rival vendors. It is unpleasant to have ugly names hurled at one by the first writer of the day; but the abuse was for the most part too general to be libellous. Nor would there be any great interest now in exactly distributing the blame between Pope and his enemies. A word or two may be said of one of the most conspicuous quarrels.

Aaron Hill was a fussy and ambitious person, full of literary and other schemes; devising a plan for extracting oil from beech-

nuts, and writing a Pindaric ode on the occasion; felling forests in the Highlands to provide timber for the navy; and, as might be inferred, spending instead of making a fortune. He was a stage-manager, translated Voltaire's *Merope*, wrote words for Handel's first composition in England, wrote unsuccessful plays, a quantity of unreadable poetry, and corresponded with most of the literary celebrities. Pope put his initials, A. H., under the head of "Flying Fishes," in the *Bathos*, as authors who now and then rise upon their fins and fly, but soon drop again to the profound. In the *Dunciad* he reappeared amongst the divers.

> "Then * * tried, but hardly snatch'd from sight
> Instant buoys up, and rises into light:
> He bears no token of the sable streams,
> And mounts far off amongst the swans of Thames."

A note applied the lines to Hill, with whom he had had a former misunderstanding. Hill replied to these assaults by a ponderous satire in verse upon "tuneful Alexis;" it had, however, some tolerable lines at the opening, imitated from Pope's own verses upon Addison, and attributing to him the same jealousy of merit in others. Hill soon afterwards wrote a civil note to Pope, complaining of the passage in the *Dunciad*. Pope might have relied upon the really satisfactory answer that the lines were, on the whole, complimentary; indeed, more complimentary than true. But with his natural propensity for lying, he resorted to his old devices. In answer to this and a subsequent letter, in which Hill retorted with unanswerable force, Pope went on to declare that he was not the author of the notes, that the extracts had been chosen at random, that he would "use his influence with the editors of the *Dunciad* to get the notes altered;" and, finally, by an ingenious evasion, pointed out that the blank in the *Dunciad* required to be filled up by a dissyllable. This, in the form of the lines as quoted above, is quite true, but in the first edition of the *Dunciad* the first verse had been

> "H—— tried the next, but hardly snatch'd from sight."

Hill did not detect this specimen of what Pope somewhere calls "pretty genteel equivocation." He was reconciled to Pope, and taught the poor poet by experience that his friendship was worse than his enmity. He wrote him letters of criticism: he forced poor Pope to negotiate for him with managers and to bring distinguished friends to the performances of his dreary plays; nay, to read through, or to say that he had read through, one of them in manuscript four times, and make corrections mixed with elaborate eulogy. No doubt Pope came to regard a letter from Hill with terror, though Hill compared him to Horace and Juvenal, and hoped that he would live till the virtues which his spirit would propagate became as general as the esteem of his genius. In short, Hill, who was a florid flatterer, is so complimentary that we

are not surprised to find him telling Richardson, after Pope's death, that the poet's popularity was due to a certain "bladdery swell of management." "But," he concludes, "rest his memory in peace! It will very rarely be disturbed by that time he himself is ashes."

The war raged for some time. Dennis, Smedley, Moore-Smythe, Welsted, and others, retorted by various pamphlets, the names of which were published by Pope in an appendix to future editions of the *Dunciad*, by way of proving that his own blows had told. Lady Mary was credited, perhaps unjustly, with an abusive performance called a "Pop upon Pope," relating how Pope had been soundly whipped by a couple of his victims—of course a pure fiction. Some such vengeance, however, was seriously threatened. As Pope was dining one day at Lord Bathurst's, the servant brought in the agreeable message that a young man was waiting for Mr. Pope in the lane outside, and that the young man's name was Dennis. He was the son of the critic, and prepared to avenge his father's wrongs; but Bathurst persuaded him to retire, without the glory of thrashing a cripple. Reports of such possibilities were circulated, and Pope thought it prudent to walk out with his big Danish dog Bounce and a pair of pistols. Spence tried to persuade the little man not to go out alone, but Pope declared that he would not go a step out of his way for such villains, and that it was better to die than to live in fear of them. He continued, indeed, to give fresh provocation. A weekly paper called the *Grub-street Journal*, was started in January, 1730, and continued to appear till the end of 1737. It included a continuous series of epigrams and abuse, in the Scriblerian vein, and aimed against the heroes of the *Dunciad*, amongst whom poor James Moore-Smythe seems to have had the largest share of abuse. It was impossible, however, for Pope, busied as he was in literature and society, and constantly out of health, to be the efficient editor of such a performance; but though he denied having any concern in it, it is equally out of the question that any one really unconnected with Pope should have taken up the huge burden of his quarrels in this fashion. Though he concealed, and on occasions denied his connexion, he no doubt inspired the editors and contributed articles to its pages, especially during its early years. It is a singular fact—or, rather, it would have been singular, had Pope been a man of less abnormal character—that he should have devoted so much energy to this paltry subterranean warfare against the objects of his complex antipathies. Pope was so anxious for concealment, that he kept his secret even from his friendly legal adviser, Fortescue; and Fortescue innocently requested Pope to get up evidence to support a charge of libel against his own organ. The evidence which Pope collected—in defence of a quack-doctor, Ward—was not, as we may suppose, very valuable. Two volumes of the *Grub-street Journal* were printed in 1737, and a fragment or two was admitted by Pope into his works. It is said, in the preface to the collected pieces, that

the journal was killed by the growing popularity of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which is accused of living by plunder. But in truth the reader will infer that, if the selection includes the best pieces, the journal may well have died from congenial weakness.

The *Dunciad* was yet to go through a transformation, and to lead to a new quarrel; and though this happened at a much later period, it will be most convenient to complete the story here. Pope had formed an alliance with Warburton, of which I shall presently have to speak; and it was under Warburton's influence that he resolved to add a fourth book to the *Dunciad*. This supplement seems to have been really made up of fragments provided for another scheme. The *Essay on Man*—to be presently mentioned—was to be followed by a kind of poetical essay upon the nature and limits of the human understanding, and a satire upon the misapplication of the serious faculties.* It was a design manifestly beyond the author's powers; and even the fragment which is turned into the fourth book of the *Dunciad* takes him plainly out of his depth. He was no philosopher, and therefore an incompetent assailant of the abuses of philosophy. The fourth book consists chiefly of ridicule upon pedagogues who teach words instead of things; upon the unlucky "virtuosos" who care for old medals, plants, and butterflies—pursuits which afforded an unceasing supply of ridicule to the essayists of the time; a denunciation of the corruption of modern youth, who learn nothing but new forms of vice in the grand tour; and a fresh assault upon Toland, Tindal, and other freethinkers of the day. There was some passages marked by Pope's usual dexterity, but the whole is awkwardly constructed, and has no very intelligible connexion with the first part. It was highly admired at the time, and, amongst others, by Gray. He specially praises a passage which has often been quoted as representing Pope's highest achievement in his art. At the conclusion the goddess Dulness yawns, and a blight falls upon art, science, and philosophy. I quote the lines, which Pope himself could not repeat without emotion, and which have received the highest eulogies from Johnson and Thackeray.

"In vain, in vain—the all-composing Hour
Resistless falls; the Muse obeys the Power—
She comes! she comes! the sable throne behold
Of night primeval and of chaos old!
Before her Fancy's gilded clouds decay,
And all its varying rainbows die away.
Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires,
The meteor drops, and in a flash expires,
As one by one, at dread Medea's strain,
The sickening stars fade off the ethereal plain;
As Argus' eyes by Hermes' wand oppress'd
Closed one by one to everlasting rest;
Thus at her felt approach, and secret might,
Art after art goes out, and all is night.

* See Pope to Swift. March 25, 1736.

See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,
Mountains of casuistry heaped o'er her head!
Philosophy, that lean'd on heaven before,
Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
Physic of Metaphysic begs defence,
And Metaphysic calls for aid on Sense!
See Mystery to Mathematics fly!
In vain! They gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die.
Religion, blushing, veils her sacred fires,
And unawares Morality expires.
Nor public flame, nor private, dares to shine;
Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine!
Lo! thy dread empire, Chaos! is restored;
Light dies before thy uncreating word;
Thy hand, great Anarch, lets the curtain fall,
And universal darkness buries all."

The most conspicuous figure in this new *Dunciad* (published March, 1742), is Bentley—taken as the representative of a pedant rampant. Bentley is, I think, the only man of real genius of whom Pope has spoken in terms implying gross misappreciation. With all his faults, Pope was a really fine judge of literature, and has made fewer blunders th an such men as Addison, Gray, and Johnson, infinitely superior to him in generosity of feeling towards the living. He could even appreciate Bentley, and had written, in his copy of Bentley's Milton, "*Pulchre, bene, recte*," against some of the happier emendations in the great critic's most unsuccessful performance. The assault in the *Dunciad* is not the less unsparing and ignorantly contemptuous of scholarship. The explanation is easy. Bentley, who had spoken contemptuously of Pope's Homer, said of Pope, "the portentous cub never forgives." But this was not all. Bentley had provoked enemies by his intense pugnacity almost as freely as Pope by his sneaking malice. Swift and Atterbury, objects of Pope's friendly admiration, had been his antagonists, and Pope would naturally accept their view of his merits. And, moreover, Pope's great ally of this period had a dislike of his own to Bentley. Bentley had said of Warburton that he was a man of monstrous appetite and bad digestion. The remark hit Warburton's most obvious weakness. Warburton, with his imperfect scholarship, and vast masses of badly assimilated learning, was jealous of the reputation of the thoroughly trained and accurate critic. It was the dislike of a charlatan for the excellence which he endeavoured to simulate. Bolingbroke, it may be added, was equally contemptuous in his language about men of learning, and for much the same reason. He depreciated what he could not rival. Pope, always under the influence of some stronger companions, naturally adopted their shallow prejudices, and recklessly abused a writer who should have been recognised as amongst the most effective combatants against dulness.

Bentley died a few months after the publication of the *Dunciad*. But Pope found a living antagonist, who succeeded in giving him pain enough to gratify the vilified dunces. This was Colley Cibber—most lively and mercurial of actors—author of some success-

ful plays, with too little stuff in them for permanence, and of an Apology for his own Life, which is still exceedingly amusing as well as useful for the history of the stage. He was now approaching seventy, though he was to survive Pope for thirteen years, and as good-tempered a specimen of the lively, if not too particular, old man of the world as could well have been found. Pope owed him a grudge. Cibber, in playing the *Rehearsal*, had introduced some ridicule of the unlucky *Three Hours after Marriage*. Pope, he says, came behind the scenes foaming and choking with fury, and forbidding Cibber ever to repeat the insult. Cibber laughed at him, and said that he would repeat it as long as the *Rehearsal* was performed, and kept his word. Pope took his revenge by many incidental hits at Cibber, and Cibber made a good-humoured reference to this abuse in the Apology. Hereupon Pope, in the new *Dunciad*, describes him as reclining on the lap of the goddess, and added various personalities in the notes. Cibber straightway published a letter to Pope, the more cutting because still in perfect good-humour, and told the story about the original quarrel. He added an irritating anecdote in order to provoke the poet still further. It describes Pope as introduced by Cibber and Lord Warwick to very bad company. The story was one which could only be told by a graceless old representative of the old school of comedy, but it hit its mark. The two Richardsons once found Pope reading one of Cibber's pamphlets. He said, "These things are my diversion;" but they saw his features writhing with anguish, and young Richardson, as they went home, observed to his father that he hoped to be preserved from such diversions as Pope had enjoyed. The poet resolved to avenge himself, and he did it to the lasting injury of his poem. He dethroned Theobald, who, as a plodding antiquarian, was an excellent exponent of dulness, and installed Cibber in his place, who might be a representative of folly, but was as little of a dullard as Pope himself. The consequent alterations makes the hero of the poem a thoroughly incongruous figure, and greatly injure the general design. The poem appeared in this form in 1743, with a pondrous prefatory discourse by Ricardus Aristarchus, contributed by the faithful Warburton, and illustrating his ponderous vein of the elephantine pleasantry.

Pope was nearing the grave, and many of his victims had gone before him. It was a melancholy employment for an invalid, breaking down visibly month by month; and one might fancy that the eminent Christian divine might have used his influence to better purpose than in fanning the dying flame, and adding the strokes of his bludgeon to the keen stabs of Pope's stiletto. In the fourteen years which elapsed since the first *Dunciad*, Pope had found less unworthy employment for his pen; but, before dealing with the works produced at this time, which include some of his highest achievements, I must tell a story which is in some ways a natural supplement to the war with the dunces. In describing Pope's entangled history, it seems most convenient to follow each separate line of discharge of his multifarious energy, rather than to adhere to chronological order.

CHAPTER VI.*

CORRESPONDENCE.

I HAVE now to describe one of the most singular series of transactions to be found in the annals of literature. A complete knowledge of their various details has only been obtained by recent researches. I cannot follow within my limits of space all the ins and outs of the complicated labyrinth of more than diplomatic trickery which those researches have revealed, though I hope to render the main facts sufficiently intelligible. It is painful to track the strange deceptions of a man of genius as a detective unravels the misdeeds of an accomplished swindler; but without telling the story at some length, it is impossible to give a faithful exhibition of Pope's character.

In the year 1726, when Pope had just finished his labours upon Homer, Curll published the juvenile letters to Cromwell. There was no mystery about this transaction. Curll was the chief of all piratical booksellers, and versed in every dirty trick of the Grub-street trade. He is described in that mad book, Amory's *John Buncle*, as tall, thin, ungainly, white-faced, with light grey goggle eyes, purblind, splay-footed and "baker-kneed." According to the same queer authority, who professes to have lodged in Curll's house, he was drunk as often as he could drink for nothing, and intimate in every London haunt of vice. "His translators lay three in a bed at the Pewter Platter Inn in Holborn," and helped to compile his indecent, piratical, and catchpenny productions. He had lost his ears for some obscene publication; but Amory adds, "to his glory," that he died "as great a penitent as ever expired." He had one strong point as an antagonist. Having no character to lose, he could reveal his own practices without a blush, if the revelation injured others.

Pope had already come into collision with this awkward antagonist. In 1716 Curll threatened to publish the *Town Eclogues*, burlesques upon Ambrose Philips, written by Lady Mary, with the help of Pope and perhaps Gay. Pope, with Lintot, had a meeting with Curll in the hopes of suppressing a publication calculated to injure his friends. The party had some wine, and Curll, on going home, was very sick. He declared—and there are reasons for believing his story—that Pope had given him an emetic by way of

* The evidence by which the statements in this chapter are supported is fully set forth in Mr. Elwin's edition of Pope's Works, Vol I., and in the notes to the Orrery Correspondence in the third volume of letters.

coarse practical joke. Pope, at any rate, took advantage of the accident to write a couple of squibs upon Curll, recording the bookseller's ravings under the action of the drug, as he had described the ravings of Dennis provoked by Cato. Curll had his revenge afterwards; but meanwhile he wanted no extraneous motive to induce him to publish the Cromwell letters. Cromwell had given the letters to a mistress, who fell into distress and told them to Curll for ten guineas.

The correspondence was received with some favour, and suggested to Pope a new mode of gratifying his vanity. An occasion soon offered itself. Theobald, the hero of the *Dunciad*, edited in 1728 the posthumous works of Wycherley. Pope extracted from this circumstance a far-fetched excuse for publishing the Wycherley correspondence. He said that it was due to Wycherley's memory to prove, by the publication of their corresponcence, that the posthumous publication of the works was opposed to their author's wishes. As a matter of fact, the letters have no tendency to prove anything of the kind, or, rather, they support the opposite theory; but poor Pope was always a hand-to-mouth liar, and took the first pretext that offered, without caring for consistency or confirmation. His next step was to write to his friend, Lord Oxford, son of Queen Anne's minister. Oxford was a weak, good-natured man. By cultivating a variety of expensive tastes, without the knowledge to guide them, he managed to run through a splendid fortune and die in embarrassment. His famous library was one of his special hobbies. Pope now applied to him to allow the Wycherley letters to be disposited in the library, and further requested that the fact of their being in this quasi-public place might be mentioned in the preface as a guarantee of their authenticity. Oxford consented, and Pope quietly took a further step without authority. He told Oxford that he had decided to make his publishers say that copies of the letters had been obtained from Lord Oxford. He told the same story to Swift, speaking of the "connivance" of his noble friend, and adding that, though he did not himself "much approve" of the publication, he was not ashamed of it. He thus ingeniously intimated that the correspondence, which he had himself carefully prepared and sent to press, had been printed without his consent by the officious zeal of Oxford and the booksellers.

The book (which was called the second volume of Wycherley's works) has entirely disappeared. It was advertised at the time, but not a single copy is known to exist. One cause of this disappearance now appears to be that it had no sale at first, and that Pope preserved the sheets for use in a more elaborate device which followed. Oxford probably objected to the misuse of his name, as the fiction which made him responsible was afterwards dropped. Pope found, or thought that he had found, on the next occasion, a more convenient cat's-paw. Curll, it could not be doubted, would snatch at any chance of publishing more correspondence: and, as Pope was anxious to have his letters stolen and Curll was ready

to steal, the one thing necessary was a convenient go-between, who could be disowned or altogether concealed. Pope went systematically to work. He began by writing to his friends, begging them to return his letters. After Curll's piracy, he declared, he could not feel himself safe, and should be unhappy till he had the letters in his own custody. Letters were sent in, though in some cases with reluctance; and Caryll, in particular, who had the largest number, privately tooke opies before returning them (a measure which ultimately secured the detection of many of Pope's manœuvres). This, however, was unknown to Pope. He had the letters copied out; after (according to his own stating) burning three-fourths of them, and (as we are now aware) carefully editing the remainder, he had the copy deposited in Lord Oxford's library. His object was, as he said, partly to have documents ready in case of the revival of scandals, and partly to preserve the memory of his friendships. The next point was to get these letters stolen. For this purpose he created a man of straw, a mysterious "P. T.," who could be personated on occasion by some of the underlings employed in the underground transactions connected with the *Dunciad* and the *Grub-street Journal*. P. T. began by writing to Curll in 1733, and offering to sell him a collection of Pope's letters. The negotiation went off for a time, because P. T. insisted upon Curll's first committing himself by publishing an advertisement, declaring himself to be already in possession of the originals. Curll was too wary to commit himself to such a statement, which would have made him responsible for the theft; or, perhaps, have justified Pope in publishing the originals in self-defence. The matter slept till March, 1735, when Curll wrote to Pope proposing a cessation of hostilities, and as a proof of good-will sending him the old P. T. advertisement. This step fell in so happily with Pope's designs that it has been suggested that Curll was prompted in some indirect manner by one of Pope's agents. Pope, at any rate, turned it to account. He at once published an insulting advertisement. Curll (he said in this manifesto) had pretended to have had the offer from P. T. of a large collection of Pope's letters; Pope knew nothing of P. T., believed the letters to be forgeries, and would take no more trouble in the matter. Whilst Curll was presumably smarting under this summary slap on the face, the insidious P. T. stepped in once more. P. T. now said that he was in possession of the printed sheets of the correspondence, and the negotiation went on swimmingly. Curll put out the required advertisement; a "short, squat" man, in a clergyman's gown and with barrister's bands, calling himself Smythe, came to his house at night as P. T.'s agent, and showed him some printed sheets and original letters; the bargain was struck; 240 copies of the book were delivered, and it was published on May 12.

So far the plot had succeeded. Pope had printed his own correspondence, and had tricked Curll into publishing the book piratically, whilst the public was quite prepared to believe that Curll had per-

formed a new piratical feat. Pope, however, was now bound to shriek as loudly as he could at the outrage under which he was suffering. He should have been prepared also to answer an obvious question. Every one would naturally inquire how Curll had procured the letters, which by Pope's own account were safely deposited in Lord Oxford's library. Without, as it would seem, properly weighing the difficulty of meeting this demand, Pope called out loudly for vengeance. When the *Dunciad* appeared, he had applied (as I have said) for an injunction in Chancery, and had at the same time secured the failure of his application. The same device was tried in a still more imposing fashion. The House of Lords had recently decided that it was a breach of privilege to publish a peer's letters without his consent. Pope availed himself of this rule to fire the most sounding of blank shots across the path of the piratical Curll. He was as anxious to allow the publication, as to demand its suppression in the most emphatic manner. Accordingly he got his friend, Lord Hay, to call the attention of the peers to Curll's advertisement, which was so worded as to imply that there were in the book letters from, as well as to, peers. Pope himself attended the house "to stimulate the resentment of his friends." The book was at once seized by a messenger, and Curll ordered to attend the next day. But on examination it immediately turned out that it contained no letters from peers, and the whole farce would have ended at once but for a further trick. Lord Hay said that a certain letter to Jervas contained a reflection upon Lord Burlington. Now the letter was found in a first batch of fifty copies sent to Curll, and which had been sold before the appearance of the Lords' messenger. But the letter had been suppressed in a second batch of 190 copies, which the messenger was just in time to seize. Pope had of course foreseen and prepared this result.

The whole proceeding in the Lords was thus rendered abortive. The books were restored to Curll, and the sale continued. But the device meanwhile had recoiled upon its author; the very danger against which he should have guarded himself had now occurred. How were the letters procured? Not till Curll was coming up for examination does it seem to have occurred to Pope that the Lords would inevitably ask the awkward question. He then saw that Curll's answer might lead to a discovery. He wrote a letter to Curll (in Smythe's name) intended to meet the difficulty. He entreated Curll to take the whole of the responsibility of procuring the letters upon himself, and by way of inducement held out hopes of another volume of correspondence. In a second note he tried to throw Curll off the scent of another significant little fact. The sheets (as I have mentioned) were partly made up from the volume of Wycherley correspondence: * this would give a clue to further inquiries: P. T. therefore allowed Smythe to say (ostensibly to show his confidence in Curll) that he (P. T.) had been employed in getting up the former volume, and had had some additional

* This is proved by a note referring to "the present edition of the posthumous works of Mr. Wycherley," which, by an oversight, was allowed to remain in the Curll volume.

sheets struck off for himself, to which he had added letters subsequently obtained. The letter was a signal blunder. Curll saw at once that it put the game in his hands. He was not going to tell lies to please the slippery P. T., or the short squat lawyer-clergyman. He had begun to see through the whole manœuvre. He went straight off to the Lords' committee, told the whole story, and produced as a voucher the letters in which P. T. begged for secrecy. Curll's word was good for little by itself, but his story hung together, and the letter confirmed it. And if, as now seemed clear, Curll was speaking the truth, the question remained, who was P. T., and how did he get the letters? The answer, as Pope must have felt, was only too clear.

But Curll now took the offensive. In reply to another letter from Smythe, complaining of his evidence, he went roundly to work; he said that he should at once publish all the correspondence. P. T. had prudently asked for the return of his letters; but Curll had kept copies, and was prepared to swear to their fidelity. Accordingly he soon advertised what was called the *Initial Correspondence*. Pope was now caught in his own trap. He had tried to avert suspicion by publicly offering a reward to Smythe and P. T., if they would "discover the whole affair." The letters, as he admitted, must have been procured either from his own library or from Lord Oxford's. The correspondence to be published by Curll would help to identify the mysterious appropriators, and whatever excuses could be made ought now to be forthcoming. Pope adopted a singular plan. It was announced that the clergyman concerned with P. T. and Curll had "discovered the whole transaction." A narrative was forthwith published to anticipate Curll and to clear up the mystery. If good for anything, it should have given, or helped to give, the key to the great puzzle—the mode of obtaining the letters. There was nothing else for Smythe or P. T. to discover." Readers must have been strangely disappointed on finding not a single word to throw light upon this subject, and merely a long account of the negotiations between Curll and P. T. The narrative might serve to distract attention from the main point, which it clearly did nothing to elucidate. But Curll now stated his own case. He reprinted the narrative with some pungent notes; he gave in full some letters omitted by P. T., and he added a story which was most unpleasantly significant. P. T. had spoken, as I have said, of his connexion with the Wycherley volume. The object of this statement was to get rid of an awkward bit of evidence. But Curll now announced, on the authority of Gilliver, the publisher of the volume, that Pope had himself bought up the remaining sheets. The inference was clear. Unless the story could be contradicted, and it never was, Pope was himself the thief. The sheets common to the two volumes had been traced to his possession. Nor was there a word in the P. T. narrative to diminish the force of these presumptions. Indeed it was curiously inconsistent, for it vaguely accused Curll of stealing the letters himself, whilst in the same breath it told how he had

bought them from P. T. In fact, P. T. was beginning to resolve himself into thin air, like the phantom in the *Dunciad.* As he vanished, it required no great acuteness to distinguish behind him the features of his ingenious creator. It was already believed at the time that the whole affair was an elaborate contrivance of Pope's, and subsequent revelations have demonstrated the truth of the hypothesis. Even the go-between Smythe was identified as one James Worsdale, a painter, actor, and author, of the Bohemian variety.

Though Curll had fairly won the game, and Pope's intrigue was even at the time sufficiently exposed, it seems to have given less scandal than might have been expected. Probably it was suspected only in literary circles, and perhaps it might be thought that, silly as was the elaborate device, the disreputable Curll was fair game for his natural enemy. Indeed, such is the irony of fate, Pope won credit with simple people. The effect of the publication, as Johnson tells us, was to fill the nation with praises of the admirable moral qualities revealed in Pope's letters. Amongst the admirers was Ralph Allen, who had made a large fortune by farming the cross-posts. His princely benevolence and sterling worth were universally admitted, and have been immortalized by the best contemporary judge of character. He was the original of Fielding's Allworthy. Like that excellent person, he seems to have had the common weakness of good men in taking others too easily at their own valuation. Pope imposed upon him, just as Blifil imposed upon his representative. He was so much pleased with the correspondence, that he sought Pope's acquaintance, and offered to publish a genuine edition at his own expense. An authoritative edition appeared, accordingly, in 1737. Pope preferred to publish by subscription, which does not seem to have filled very rapidly, though the work ultimately made a fair profit. Pope's underhand manœuvres were abundantly illustrated in the history of this new edition. It is impossible to give the details; but I may briefly state that he was responsible for a nominally spurious edition which appeared directly after, and was simply a reproduction of Curll's publication. Although he complained of the garbling and interpolations supposed to have been due to the wicked Curll or the phantom P. T., and although he omitted in his avowed edition certain letters which had given offence, he nevertheless substantially reproduced in it Curll's version of the letters. As this differs from the originals which have been preserved, Pope thus gave an additional proof that he was really responsible for Curll's supposed garbling. This evidence was adduced with conclusive force by Bowles in a later controversy, and would be enough by itself to convict Pope of the imputed deception. Finally, it may be added that Pope's delay in producing his own edition is explained by the fact that it contained many falsifications of his correspondence with Caryll, and that he delayed the acknowledgment of the genuine character of the letters until Caryll's death removed the danger of detection.

The whole of this elaborate machinery was devised in order that Pope might avoid the ridicule of publishing his own correspondence. There had been few examples of a similar publication of private letters; and Pope's volume, according to Johnson, did not attract very much attention. This is, perhaps, hardly consistent with Johnson's other assertion that it filled the nation with praises of his virtue. In any case it stimulated his appetite for such praises, and led him to a fresh intrigue, more successful, and also more disgraceful. The device originally adopted in publishing the *Dunciad* apparently suggested part of the new plot. The letters hitherto published did not include the most interesting correspondence in which Pope had been engaged. He had been in the habit of writing to Swift since their first acquaintance, and Bolingbroke had occasionally joined him. These letters, which connected Pope with two of his most famous contemporaries, would be far more interesting than the letters to Cromwell or Wycherley, or even than the letters addressed to Addison and Steele, which were mere stilted fabrications. How could they be got before the world, and in such a way as to conceal his own complicity?

Pope had told Swift (in 1730) that he had kept some of the letters in a volume for his own secret satisfaction; and Swift had preserved all Pope's letters along with those of other distinguished men. Here was an attractive booty for such parties as the unprincipled Curll! In 1735 Curll had committed his wicked piracy, and Pope pressed Swift to return his letters, in order to "secure him against that rascal printer." The entreaties were often renewed, but Swift for some reason turned his deaf ear to the suggestion. He promised, indeed (September 3, 1735), that the letters should be burnt—a most effectual security against republication, but one not at all to Pope's taste. Pope then admitted that, having been forced to publish some of his other letters, he should like to make use of some of those to Swift, as none would be more honorable to him. Nay, he says, he meant to erect such a minute monument of their friendship as would put to shame all ancient memorials of the same kind.* This avowal of his intention to publish did not conciliate Swift. Curll next published, in 1736, a couple of letters to Swift, and Pope took advantage of this publication [perhaps he had indirectly supplied Curll with copies] to urge upon Swift the insecurity of the letters in his keeping. Swift ignored the request, and his letters about this time began to show that his memory was failing, and his intellect growing weak.

Pope now applied to their common friend, Lord Orrery. Orrery was the dull member of a family eminent for its talents. His father had left a valuable library to Christ Church, ostensibly because the son was not capable of profiting by books, though a less creditable reason has been assigned.* The son, eager to wipe off

* These expressions come from two letters of Pope to Lord Orrery in March, 1737, and may not accurately reproduce his statements to Swift; but they probably represent approximately what he had said.

† It is said that the son objected to allow his wife to meet his father's mistress.

the imputation, specially affected the society of wits and was elaborately polite both to Swift and Pope. Pope now got Orrery to intercede with Swift, urging that the letters were no longer safe in the custody of a failing old man. Orrery succeeded, and brought the letters in a sealed packet to Pope in the summer of 1737. Swift, it must be added, had an impression that there was a gap of six years in the collection; he became confused as to what had or had not been sent, and had a vague belief in a "great collection" of letters "placed in some very safe hand." * Pope, being thus in possession of the whole correspondence, proceeded to perform a manœuvre resembling those already employed in the case of the *Dunciad* and of the P. T. letters. He printed the correspondence clandestinely. He then sent the printed volume to Swift, accompanied by an anonymous letter. This letter purported to come from some persons who, from admiration of Swift's private and public virtues, had resolved to preserve letters so creditable to him, and had accordingly put them in type. They suggested that the volume would be suppressed if it fell into the hands of Bolingbroke and Pope (a most audacious suggestion!), and intimated that Swift should himself publish it. No other copy, they said, was in existence. Poor Swift fell at once into the trap. He ought, of course, to have consulted Pope or Bolingbroke, and would probably have done so had his mind been sound. Seeing, however, a volume already printed, he might naturally suppose that, in spite of the anonymous assurance, it was already too late to stop the publication. At any rate, he at once sent it to his publisher, Faulkner, and desired him to bring it out at once. Swift was in that most melancholy state in which a man's friends perceive him to be incompetent to manage his affairs, and are yet not able to use actual restraint. Mrs. Whiteway, the sensible and affectionate cousin who took care of him at this time, did her best to protest against the publication, but in vain. Swift insisted. So far Pope's device was successful. The printed letters had been placed in the hands of his bookseller by Swift himself, and publication was apparently secured. But Pope had still the same problem as in the previous case. Though he had talked of erecting a monument to Swift and himself, he was anxious that the monument should apparently be erected by some one else. His vanity could only be satisfied by the appearance that the publication was forced upon him. He had, therefore, to dissociate himself from the publication by some protest at once emphatic and ineffectual; and, consequently, to explain the means by which the letters had been surreptitiously obtained.

The first aim was unexpectedly difficult. Faulkner turned out to be an honest bookseller. Instead of sharing Curll's rapacity, he consented, at Mrs. Whiteway's request, to wait until Pope had an opportunity of expressing his wishes. Pope, if he consented, could no longer complain; if he dissented, Faulkner would suppress the letters. In this dilemma, Pope first wrote to Faulkner to refuse per-

* See Elwin's edition of Pope's Correspondence, iii., 399, note.

mission, and at the same time took care that his letter should be delayed for a month. He hoped that Faulkner would lose patience, and publish. But Faulkner, with provoking civility, stopped the press as soon as he heard of Pope's objection. Pope hereupon discovered that the letters were certain to be published, as they were already printed, and doubtless by some mysterious "confederacy of people" in London. All he could wish was to revise them before appearance. Meanwhile he begged Lord Orrery to inspect the book, and say what he thought of it. "Guess in what a situation I must be," exclaimed this sincere and modest person, "not to be able to see what all the world is to read as mine!" Orrery was quite as provoking as Faulkner. He got the book from Faulkner, read it, and instead of begging Pope not to deprive the world of so delightful a treat, said, with dull integrity, that he thought the collection "unworthy to be published."—Orrery, however, was innocent enough to accept Pope's suggestion, that letters which had once got into such hands would certainly come out sooner or later. After some more haggling, Pope ultimately decided to take this ground. He would, he said, have nothing to do with the letters; they would come out in any case; their appearance would please the Dean, and he (Pope) would stand clear of all responsibility. He tried, indeed, to get Faulkner to prefix a statement tending to fix the whole transaction upon Swift; but the bookseller declined, and the letters ultimately came out with a simple statement that they were a reprint.

Pope had thus virtually sanctioned the publication. He was not the less emphatic in complaining of it to his friends. To Orrery, who knew the facts, he represented the printed copy sent to Swift as a proof that the letters were beyond his power; and to others, such as his friend Allen, he kept silent as to this copy altogether; and gave them to understand that poor Swift—or some member of Swift's family—was the prime mover in the business. His mystification had, as before, driven him into perplexities upon which he had never calculated. In fact, it was still more difficult here than in the previous case to account for the original misappropriation of the letters. Who could the thief have been? Orrery, as we have seen, had himself taken a packet of letters to Pope, which would be of course the letters from Pope to Swift. The packet being sealed, Orrery did not know the contents, and Pope asserted that he had burnt it almost as soon as received. It was, however, true that Swift had been in the habit of showing the originals to his friends, and some might possibly have been stolen or copied by designing people. But this would not account for the publication of Swift's letters to Pope, which had never been out of Pope's possession. As he had certainly been in possession of the other letters, it was easiest, even for himself, to suppose that some of his own servants were the guilty persons; his own honour being, of course, beyond question.

To meet these difficulties, Pope made great use of some stray phrases dropped by Swift in the decline of his memory, and set up a story of his having himself returned some letters to Swift, of which

important fact all traces had disappeared. One characteristic device will be a sufficient specimen. Swift wrote that a great collection of "*my* letters to *you*" is somewhere "in a safe hand." He meant, of course, "a collection of *your* letters to *me*"—the only letters of which he could know anything. Observing the slip of the pen, he altered the phrase by writing the correct words above the line. It now stood—"your letters to me / my you." Pope laid great stress upon this, interpreting it to mean that the "great collection" included letters from each correspondent to the other—the fact being that Swift had only the letters from Pope to himself. The omission of an erasure (whether by Swift or Pope) caused the whole meaning to be altered. As the great difficulty was to explain the publication of Swift's letters to Pope, this change supplied a very important link in the evidence. It implied that Swift had been at some time in possession of the letters in question, and had trusted them to some one supposed to be safe. The whole paragraph, meanwhile, appears, from the unimpeachable evidence of Mrs. Whiteway, to have involved one of the illusions of memory, for which he (Swift) apologises in the letter from which this is extracted, By insisting upon this passage, and upon certain other letters dexterously confounded with those published, Pope succeeded in raising dust enough to blind Lord Orrery's not very piercing intelligence. The inference which he desired to suggest was that some persons in Swift's family had obtained possession of the letters. Mrs. Whiteway, indeed, met the suggestion so clearly, and gave such good reasons for assigning Twickenham as the probable centre of the plot, that she must have suspected the truth. Pope did not venture to assail her publicly, though he continued to talk of treachery or evil influence.

The accuse innocent people of a crime which you know yourself to have committed is bad enough. It is, perhaps, even baser to lay a trap for a friend, and reproach him for falling into it. Swift had denied the publication of the letters, and Pope would have had some grounds of complaint had he not been aware of the failure of Swift's mind, and had he not been himself the tempter. His position, however, forced him to blame his friend. It was a necessary part of his case to impute at least a breach of confidence to his victim. He therefore took the attitude—it must, one hopes, have cost him a blush—of one who is seriously aggrieved, but who is generously anxious to shield a friend in consideration of his known infirmity. He is forced, in sorrow, to admit that Swift has erred, but he will not allow himself to be annoyed. The most humiliating words ever written by a man not utterly vile, must have been those which Pope set down in a letter to Nugent, after giving his own version of the case: "I think I can make no reflections upon this strange incident but what are truly melancholy, and humble the pride of human nature. That the greatest of geniuses, though prudence may have been the companion of wit (which is very rare) for their whole lives past, may have nothing left them but their vanity. No decay of

body is half so miserable." The most audacious hypocrite of fiction pales beside this. Pope, condescending to the meanest complication of lies to justify a paltry vanity, taking advantage of his old friend's dotage to trick him into complicity, then giving a false account of his error, and finally moralising, with all the airs of philosophic charity, and taking credit for his generosity, is altogether a picture to set fiction at defiance.

I must add a remark not so edifying. Pope went down to his grave soon afterwards, without exciting suspicion except among two or three people intimately concerned. A whisper of doubt was soon hushed. Even the biographers who were on the track of his former deception did not suspect this similar iniquity. The last of them, Mr. Carruthers, writing in 1857, observes upon the pain given to Pope by the treachery of Swift—a treachery of course palliated by Swift's failure of mind. At last Mr. Dilke discovered the truth, which had been placed beyond doubt by the still later discovery of the letters to Orrery. The moral is, apparently, that it is better to cheat a respectable man than a rogue; for the respectable tacitly form a society for mutual support of character, whilst the open rogue will be only too glad to show that you are even such an one as himself.

It was not probable that letters thus published should be printed with scrupulous accuracy. Pope, indeed, can scarcely have attempted to conceal the fact that they had been a good deal altered. And so long as the letters were regarded merely as literary compositions, the practice was at least pardonable. But Pope went further; and the full extent of his audacious changes was not seen until Mr. Dilke became possessed of the Caryll correspondence. On comparing the copies preserved by Caryll with the letters published by Pope, it became evident that Pope had regarded these letters as so much raw material, which he might carve into shape at pleasure, and with such alterations of date and address as might be convenient, to the confusion of all biographers and editors ignorant of his peculiar method of editing. The details of these very disgraceful falsifications have been fully described by Mr. Elwin,* but I turn gladly from this lamentable narrative to say something of the literary value of the correspondence. Every critic has made the obvious remark that Pope's letters are artificial and self-conscious. Pope claimed the opposite merit. "It is many years ago," he says to Swift in 1729, "since I wrote as a wit." He smiles to think "how Curll would be bit were our epistles to fall into his hands, and how gloriously they would fall short of every ingenious reader's anticipations." Warburton adds in a note that Pope used to "value himself upon this particular." It is indeed true that Pope had dropped the boyish affectation of his letters to Wycherley and Cromwell. But such a statement in the mouth of a man who plotted to secure Curll's publication of his letters, with devices elaborate enough to make the reputation of an unscrupulous

* Pope's Works, vol. i. p. cxxi.

diplomatist, is of course only one more example of the superlative degree of affectation, the affectation of being unaffected, We should be, indeed, disappointed were we to expect in Pope's letters what we find in the best specimens of the art: the charm which belongs to a simple outpouring of friendly feeling in private intercourse; the sweet playfulness of Cowper, or the grave humour of Gray, or even the sparkle and brilliance of Walpole's admirable letters. Though Walpole had an eye to posterity, and has his own mode of affectation, he is for the moment intent on amusing, and is free from the most anoying blemish in Pope's writing, the resolution to appear always in full dress, and to mount as often as possible upon the stilts of moral self-approbation. All this is obvious to the hasty reader; and yet I must confess my own conviction that there is scarcely a more interesting volume in the language than that which contains the correspondence of Swift, Bolingbroke, and Pope. To enjoy it, indeed, we must not expect to be in sympathy with the writers. Rather we must adopt the mental attitude of spectators of a scene of high comedy—the comedy which is dashed with satire and has a tragical side to it. We are behind the scenes in Vanity Fair, and listening to the talk of three of its most famous performers, doubting whether they most deceive each other, or the public or themselves. The secret is an open one for us, now that the illusion which perplexed contemporaries has worn itself threadbare.

The most impressive letters are doubtless those of Swift—the stern, sad humourist, frowning upon the world which has rejected him, and covering his wrath with an affectation, not of fine sentiment, but of misanthropy. A soured man prefers to turn his worst side outwards. There are phrases in his letters which brand themselves upon the memory like those of no other man; and we are softened into pity as the strong mind is seen gradually sinking into decay. The two other sharers in the colloquy are in effective contrast. We see through Bolingbroke's magnificent self-deceit; the flowing manners of the statesman who, though the game is lost, is longing for a favourable turn of the card, but still effects to solace himself with philosophy, and wraps himself in dignified reflections upon the blessings of retirement, contrast with Swift's downright avowal of indignant scorn for himself and mankind. And yet we have a sense of the man's amazing cleverness, and regret that he has no chance of trying one more fall with his antagonists in the open arena. Pope's affectation is perhaps the most transparent and the most gratuitous. His career had been pre-eminently successful; his talents had found their natural outlet; and he had only to be what he apparently persuaded himself that he was, to be happy in spite of illness. He is constantly flourishing his admirable moral sense in our faces, dilating upon his simplicity, modesty, fidelity to his friends, indifference to the charms of fame, till we are almost convinced that he has imposed upon himself. By some strange piece of legerdemain he must surely have succeeded in regarding even his deliberate artifices, with the astonishing masses

of hypocritical falsehoods which they entailed, as in some way legitimate weapons against a world full of piratical Curlls and deep laid plots. And, indeed, with all his delinquencies, and with all his affectations, there are moments in which we forget to preserve the correct tone of moral indignation. Every now and then genuine feeling seems to come to the surface. For a time the superincumbent masses of hypocrisy vanish. In speaking of his mother or his pursuits he forgets to wear his mask. He feels a genuine enthusiasm about his friends; he believes with almost pathetic earnestness in the amazing talents of Bolingbroke, and the patriotic devotion of the younger men who are rising up to overthrow the corruptions of Walpole; he takes the affectation of his friends as seriously as a simple-minded man who has never fairly realised the possibility of deliberate hypocrisy; and he utters sentiments about human life and its objects which, if a little tinted with commonplace, have yet a certain ring of sincerity, and, as we may believe, were really sincere for the time. At such moments we seem to see the man behind the veil—the really loveable nature which could know as well as simulate feeling. And, indeed, it is this quality which makes Pope endurable. He was—if we must speak bluntly—a liar and a hypocrite; but the foundation of his character was not selfish or grovelling. On the contrary, no man could be more warmly affectionate or more exquisitely sensitive to many noble emotions. The misfortune was that his constitutional infirmities, acted upon by unfavorable conditions, developed his craving for applause and his fear of censure, till certain morbid tendencies in him assumed proportions which, compared to the same weaknesses in ordinary mankind, are as the growth of plants in a tropical forest to their stunted representatives in the North.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ESSAY ON MAN.

It is a relief to turn from this miserable record of Pope's petty or malicious deceptions to the history of his legitimate career. I go back to the period when he was still in full power. Having finished the *Dunciad*, he was soon employed on a more ambitious task. Pope resembled one of the inferior bodies of the solar system, whose orbit is dependent upon that of some more massive planet; and having been a satellite of Swift, he was now swept into the train of the more imposing Bolingbroke. He had been originally introduced to Bolingbroke by Swift, but had probably seen little of the brilliant minister who, in the first years of their acquaintance, had too many occupations to give much time to the rising poet. Bolingbroke, however, had been suffering a long eclipse, whilst Pope was gathering fresh splendor. In his exile, Bolingbroke, though never really weaned from political ambition, had amused himself with superficial philosophical studies. In political life it was his special glory to extemporise statesmanship without sacrificing pleasure. He could be at once the most reckless of rakes and the leading spirit in the Cabinet or the House of Commons. He seems to have thought that philosophical eminence was obtainable in the same off-hand fashion, and that a brilliant style would justify a man in laying down the law to metaphysicians as well as to diplomatists and politicians. His philosophical writings are equally superficial and arrogant, though they show here and there the practised debater's power of making a good point against his antagonist without really grasping the real problems at issue.

Bolingbroke received a pardon in 1723, and returned to England, crossing Atterbury, who had just been convicted of treasonable practices. In 1725 Bolingbroke settled at Dawley, near Uxbridge, and for the next ten years he was alternately amusing himself in playing the retired philosopher, and endeavouring, with more serious purpose, to animate the opposition to Walpole. Pope, who was his frequent guest, sympathised with his schemes, and was completely dazzled by his eminence. He spoke of him with bated breath, as being almost superior to humanity. "It looks," said Pope once, "as if that great man had been placed here by mistake. When the comet appeared a month or two ago," he added, "I some-

times fancied that it might be come to carry him home, as a coach comes to one's door for other visitors." Of all the graceful compliments in Pope's poetry, none are more ardent or more obviously sincere than those addressed to this "guide, philosopher, and friend." He delighted to bask in the sunshine of the great man's presence. Writing to Swift in 1728, he (Pope) says that he is holding the pen "for my Lord Bolingbroke," who is reading your letter between two hay-cocks, with his attention occasionally distracted by a threatening shower. Bolingbroke is acting the temperate recluse, having nothing for dinner but mutton-broth, beans and bacon, and a barn-door fowl. Whilst his lordship is running after a cart, Pope snatches a moment to tell how the day before this noble farmer had engaged a painter for 200*l.* to give the correct agricultural air to his country hall by ornamenting it with trophies of spades, rakes, and prongs. Pope saw that the zeal for retirement was not free from affectation, but he sat at the teacher's feet with profound belief in the value of the lessons which flowed from his lips.

The connexion was to bear remarkable fruit. Under the direction of Bolingbroke, Pope resolved to compose a great philosophical poem. "Does Pope talk to you," says Bolingbroke to Swift in 1731, "of the noble work which, at my instigation, he has begun in such a manner that he must be convinced by this time I judged better of his talents than he did?" And Bolingbroke proceeds to describe the *Essay on Man*, of which it seems that three (out of four) epistles were now finished. The first of these epistles appeared in 1733. Pope, being apparently nervous on his first appearance as a philosopher, withheld his name. The other parts followed in the course of 1733 and 1734, and the authorship was soon avowed The *Essay on Man* is Pope's most ambitious performance, and the one by which he was best known beyond his own country. It has been frequently translated; it was imitated both in France and Germany, and provoked a controversy, not like others in Pope's history of the purely personal kind.

The *Essay on Man* professes to be a theodicy. Pope, with an echo of the Miltonic phrase, proposes to

"Vindicate the ways of God to man."

He is thus attempting the greatest task to which poet or philosopher can devote himself—the exhibition of an organic and harmonious view of the universe. In a time when men's minds are dominated by a definiate religious creed, the poet may hope to achieve success in such an undertaking without departing from his legitimate method. His vision pierces to the world hidden from our senses, and realises in the transitory present a scene in the slow development of a divine drama. To make us share his vision is to give his justification of Providence. When Milton told the story of the war in heaven and the fall of man, he gave implicitly his theory of the true relations of man to his Creator, but the abstract doctrine was clothed in the flesh and blood of a concrete mythology.

In Pope's day the traditional belief had lost its hold upon men's minds too completely to be used for imaginative purposes. The story of Adam and Eve would itself require to be justified or to be rationalised into thin allegory. Nothing was left possessed of any vitality but a bare skeleton of abstract theology dependent upon argument instead of tradition, and which might use or might dispense with a Christian phraseology. Its deity was not a historical personage, but the name of a metaphysical conception. For a revelation was substituted a demonstration. To vindicate Providence meant no longer to stimulate imagination by a pure and sublime rendering of accepted truths, but to solve certain philosophical problems, and especially the grand difficulty of reconciling the existence of evil with divine omnipotence and benevolence.

Pope might conceivably have written a really great poem on these terms, though deprived of the concrete imagery of a Dante or a Milton. If he had fairly grasped some definite conception of the universe, whether pantheistic or atheistic, optimist or pessimist, proclaiming a solution of the mystery, or declaring all solutions to be impossible, he might have given forcible expression to the corresponding emotions. He might have uttered the melancholy resignation and the confident hope incited in different minds by a contemplation of the mysterious world. He might again conceivably have written an interesting work, though it would hardly have been a poem—if he had versified the arguments by which a coherent theory might be supported. Unluckily he was quite unqualified for either undertaking, and, at the same time, he more or less aimed at both. Anything like sustained reasoning was beyond his reach. Pope felt and thought by shocks and electric flashes. He could only obtain a continuous effect when working clearly upon lines already provided for him, or simulate one by fitting together fragments struck out at intervals. The defect was aggravated or caused by the physical infirmities which put sustained intellectual labor out of the question. The laborious and patient meditation which brings a converging series of arguments to bear upon a single point was to him as impossible as the power of devising an elaborate strategical combination to a dashing Prince Rupert. The reasonings in the *Essay* are confused, contradictory, and often childish. He was equally far from having assimilated any definite system of thought. Brought up as a Catholic, he had gradually swung into vague deistic belief. But he had never studied any philosophy or theology whatever, and he accepts in perfect unconsciousness fragments of the most heterogeneous systems.

Swift, in verses from which I have already quoted, describes his method of composition, which is characteristic of Pope's habits of work.

> "Now backs of letters, though design'd
> For those who more will need 'em,
> Are fill'd with hints and interlined,
> Himself can scarcely read 'em.

"Each atom by some other struck
All turns and motions tries;
Till in a lump together stuck,
Behold a poem rise!"

It was strange enough that any poem should arise by such means; but it would have been miraculous if a poem so constructed had been at once a demonstration and an exposition of a harmonious philosophical system. The confession which he made to Warburton will be a sufficient indication of his qualifications as a student. He says (in 1739) that he never in his life read a line of Leibnitz, nor knew, till he found it in a confutation of his *Essay*, that there was such a term as pre-established harmony. That is almost as if a modern reconciler of faith and science were to say that he had never read a line of Mr. Darwin, or heard of such a phrase as the struggle for existence. It was to pronounce himself absolutely disqualified to speak as a philosopher.

How, then, could Pope obtain even an appearance of success? The problem should puzzle no one at the present day. Every smart essayist knows how to settle the most abstruse metaphysical puzzles after studies limited to the pages of a monthly magazine; and Pope was much in the state of mind of such extemporising philosophers. He had dipped into the books which everybody read; Locke's *Essay*, and Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, and Wollaston's *Religion of Nature*, and Clarke on the *Attributes*, and Archbishop King on the *Origin of Evil*, had probably amused his spare moments. They were all, we may suppose, in Bolingbroke's library; and if that passing shower commemorated in Pope's letter drove them back to the house, Bolingbroke might discourse from the page which happened to be open, and Pope would try to versify it on the back of an envelope.* Nor must we forget, like some of his commentators, that after all Pope was an exceedingly clever man. His rapidly perceptive mind was fully qualified to imbibe the crude versions of philosophic theories which float upon the surface of ordinary talk, and are not always so inferior to their prototypes in philosophic qualities as philosophers would have us believe. He could by snatches seize with admirable quickness the general spirit of a doctrine, though unable to sustain himself at a high intellectual level for any length of time. He was ready with abundance of poetical illustrations, not, perhaps, very closely adapted to the logic, but capable of being elaborated into effective passages; and, finally, Pope had always a certain number of more or less appropriate commonplaces or renderings into verse of some passages which had struck him in Pascal or Rochefoucauld, or Bacon, all of them favourite authors, and which could be wrought into the structure at a slight cost of coherence. By such means he could put together a poem, which was certainly not an organic whole, but which might contain many striking sayings and passages of great rhetorical effect.

* "No letter with an envelope could give him more delight," says Swift.

The logical framework was, we may guess, supplied mainly by Bolingbroke. Bathurst told Warton that Bolingbroke had given Pope the essay in prose, and that Pope had only turned it into verse; and Mallet—a friend of both—is said to have seen the very manuscript from which Pope worked. Johnson, on hearing this from Boswell, remarked that it must be an overstatement. Pope might have had from Bolingbroke the "philosophical stamina" of the essay, but he must, at least, have contributed the "poetical imagery," and have had more independent power than the story implied. It is, indeed, impossible accurately to fix the relations of the teacher and his disciple. Pope acknowledged in the strongest possible terms his dependence upon Bolingbroke, and Bolingbroke claims with equal distinctness the position of instigator and inspirer. His more elaborate philosophical works are in the form of letters to Pope, and profess to be a redaction of the conversations which they had had together. These were not written till after the *Essay on Man;* but a series of fragments appear to represent what he actually set down for Pope's guidance. They are professedly addressed to Pope. "I write," he says (fragment 65), "to you and for you, and you would think yourself little obliged to me if I took the pains of explaining in prose what you would not think it necessary to explain in verse"—that is, the free-will puzzle. The manuscripts seen by Mallet may probably have been a commonplace book in which Bolingbroke had set down some of these fragments, by way of instructing Pope, and preparing for his own more systematic work. No reader of the fragments can, I think, doubt as to the immediate source of Pope's inspiration. Most of the ideas expressed were the common property of many contemporary writers, but Pope accepts the particular modification presented by Bolingbroke.* Pope's manipulation of these materials causes much of the *Essay on Man* to resemble (as Mr. Pattison puts it) an exquisite mosaic work. A detailed examination of his mode of transmutation would be a curious study in the technical secrets of literary execution. A specimen or two will sufficiently indicate the general character of Pope's method of constructing his essay.

The forty-third fragment of Bolingbroke is virtually a prose version of much of Pope's poetry. A few phrases will exhibit the relation :—

> "Through worlds unnumber'd, though the God be known
> 'Tis ours to *trace Him only in our own.*
> He who through vast immensity can pierce,
> See worlds on worlds *compose one universe,*
> Observe how *system into system runs,*
> What other planets circle other suns,
> What varied being peoples every star,
> May tell why Heaven has made us what we are.

* It would be out of place to discuss this in detail, but I may say that Pope's crude theory of the state of nature, his psychology as to reason and instinct, and self-love, and his doctrine of the scale of beings, all seem to have the specific Bolingbroke stamp.

> But of this frame, the bearings and *the ties*,
> The strong *connexions*, nice *dependencies*,
> *Gradations* just, has thy pervading soul
> Looked through, or can a part contain the whole?"

"The universe," I quote only a few phrases from Bolingbroke, "is an immense aggregate of systems. Every one of these, *if we may judge by our own*, contains several; and every one of these again, *if we may judge by our own*, is made up of a multitude of different modes of being, animated and inanimated, thinking and unthinking . . . but all concurring in one common system . . . . Just so it is with respect to the various systems and *systems of systems that compose the universe*. As distant as they are, and as different as we may imagine them to be, they are all *tied* together by relations and *connexions*, *gradations*, and *dependencies*." The verbal coincidence is here as marked as the coincidence in argument. Warton refers to an eloquent passage in Shaftesbury, which contains a similar thought: but one can hardly doubt that Bolingbroke was in this case the immediate source. A quaint passage a little farther on, in which Pope represents man as complaining because he has not "the strength of bulls or the fur of bears," may be traced with equal plausibility to Shaftesbury or to Sir Thomas Browne; but I have not noticed it in Bolingbroke.

One more passage will be sufficient. Pope asks whether we are to demand the suspension of laws of nature whenever they might produce a mischievous result? Is Etna to cease an eruption to spare a sage, or should "new motions be impressed upon sea and air" for the advantage of blameless Bethel?

> "When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
> Shall gravitation cease, if you go by?
> Or some old temple, nodding to its fall,
> For Chartres' head reserve the hanging wall?"

Chartres is Pope's typical villain. This is a terse version, with concrete cases, of Bolingbroke's vaguer generalities. "The laws of gravitation," he says, "must sometimes be suspended (if special Providence be admitted), and sometimes their effect must be precipitated. The tottering edifice must be kept miraculously from falling, whilst innocent men lived in it or passed under it, and the fall of it must be as miraculously determined to crush the guilty inhabitant or passenger." Here again, we have the alternative of Wollaston, who uses a similar illustration, and in one phrase comes nearer to Pope. He speaks of "new motions being impressed upon the atmosphere." We may suppose that the two friends had been dipping into Wollaston together. Elsewhere Pope seems to have stolen for himself. In the beginning of the second epistle, Pope, in describing man as "the glory, jest, and riddle of the world," is simply versifying Pascal; and a little farther on, when he speaks of reason as the wind and passion as the gale on life's vast ocean, he is adapting his comparison from Locke's treatise on government.

If all such cases were adduced, we should have nearly picked the argumentative part of the essay to pieces; but Bolingbroke supplies throughout the most characteristic element. The fragments cohere by external cement, not by an internal unity of thought; and Pope too often descends to the level of mere satire, or indulges in a quaint conceit or palpable sophistry. Yet it would be very unjust to ignore the high qualities which are to be found in this incongruous whole. The style is often admirable. When Pope is at his best every word tells. His precision and firmness of touch enables him to get the greatest possible meaning into a narrow compass. He uses only one epithet but it is the right one, and never boggles and patches, or, in his own phrase, "blunders round about a meaning." Warton gives, as a specimen of this power, the lines:—

> "But errs not nature from this gracious end
> From burning suns when livid deaths descend,
> When earthquakes swallow or when tempests sweep
> Towns to one grave, whole nations to the deep?"

And Mr. Pattison reinforces the criticism by quoting Voltaire's feeble imitation:—

> "Quand des vents du midi les funestes haleines
> De semence de mort ont inondé nos plaines,
> Direz-vous vue jamais le ciel en son courroux
> Ne laissa la santé séjourner parmi nous?"

It is true that, in the effort to be compressed, Pope has here and there cut to the quick and suppressed essential parts of speech, till the lines can only be construed by our independent knowledge of their meaning. The famous line—

> "Man never is but always to be blest,"

is an example of defective construction, though his language is often tortured by more elliptical phrases. * This power of charging lines with great fulness of meaning enables Pope to soar for brief periods into genuine and impressive poetry. Whatever his philosophical weakness and his moral obliquity, he is often moved by genuine emotion. He has a vein of generous sympathy for human sufferings and of righteous indignation against bigots, and if he only half understands his own optimism, that "whatever is is right," the vision, rather poetical than philosophical, of a harmo-

* Perhaps the most curious example, too long for quotation, is a passage near the end of the last epistle, in which he sums up his moral system by a series of predicates for which it is impossible to find any subject. One couplet runs—

> "Never elated whilst one man's depress'd,
> Never dejected whilst another's blest."

It is impressive, but it is quite impossible to discover by the rules of grammatical construction who is to be never elated and depressed.

nious universe lifts him at times into a region loftier than that of frigid and pedantic platitude. The most popular passages were certain purple patches, not arising very spontaneously or with much relevance, but also showing something more than the practised rhetorician. The "poor Indian" in one of the most highly polished paragraphs—

> "Who thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
> His faithful dog shall bear him company."

intrudes rather at the expense of logic, and is a decidedly conventional person. But this passage has a certain glow of fine humanity, and is touched with real pathos. A further passage or two may sufficiently indicate his higher qualities. In the end of the third epistle Pope is discussing the origin of government and the state of nature, and discussing them in such a way as to show conclusively that he does not in the least understand the theories in question or their application. His state of Nature is a sham reproduction of the golden age of poets, made to do duty in a scientific speculation. A flimsy hypothesis learnt from Bolingbroke is not improved when overlaid with Pope's conventional ornamentation. The imaginary history proceeds to relate the growth of superstition, which destroys the primeval innocence; but why or when does not very clearly appear; yet though the general theory is incoherent, he catches a distinct view of one aspect of the question, and expresses a tolerably trite view of the question with singular terseness. Who, he asks,—

> "First taught souls enslaved and realms undone,
> The enormous faith of many made for one?"

He replied,—

> "Force first made conquest, and that conquest law
> Till Superstition taught the tyrant awe,
> Then shared the tyranny, then lent it aid,
> And gods of conquerors, slaves of subjects made,
> She, 'mid the lightning's blaze and thunder's sound,
> When rock'd the mountains and when groan'd the ground,
> She taught the weak to trust, the proud to pray
> To Power unseen and mightier far than they;
> She from the rending earth and bursting skies
> Saw gods descend and fiends infernal rise;
> There fix'd the dreadful, there the blest abodes;
> Fear made her devils, and weak hope her gods;
> Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
> Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust,
> Such as the souls of cowards might conceive,
> And, framed like tyrants, tyrants would believe."

If the test of poetry were the power of expressing a theory more closely and pointedly than prose, such writing would take a very high place. Some popular philosophers would make a sounding chapter out of those sixteen lines.

The *Essay on Man* brought Pope into difficulties. The central thesis, "whatever is is right," might be understood in various senses, and in some sense it would be accepted by every theist. But, in Bolingbroke's teaching, it received a heterodox application, and in Pope's imperfect version of Bolingbroke the taint was not removed. The logical outcome of the rationalistic theory of the time was some form of pantheism, and the tendency is still more marked in a poetical statement, where it was difficult to state the refined distinctions by which the conclusion is averted. When theology is regarded as demonstrable by reason, the need of a revelation ceases to be obvious. The optimistic view, which sees the proof of divine order in the vast harmony of the whole visible world, throws into the background the darker side of the universe reflected in the theological doctrines of human corruption, and the consequent need of a future judgment in separation of good from evil. I need not inquire whether any optimistic theory is really tenable; but the popular version of the creed involved the attempt to ignore the evils under which all creation groans, and produced in different minds the powerful retort of Butler's *Analogy*, and the biting sarcasm of Voltaire's *Candide*. Pope, accepting the doctrine without any perception of these difficulties, unintentionally fell into sheer pantheism. He was not yielding to the logical instinct which carries out a theory to its legitimate development; but obeying the imaginative impulse which cannot stop to listen to the usual qualifications and safeguards of the orthodox reasoner. The best passages in the essay are those in which he is frankly pantheistic, and is swept, like Shaftesbury, into enthusiastic assertion of the universal harmony of things.

> "All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
> Whose body nature is, and God the soul;
> That changed thro' all and yet in all the same,
> Great in the earth as in the ethereal frame;
> Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
> Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;
> Lives thro' all life, extends thro' all extent,
> Spreads undivided, operates unspent;
> Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
> As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
> As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns,
> As the rapt seraph that adores and burns;
> To him, no high, no low, no great, no small,
> He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all."

In spite of some awkward phrases (hair and heart is a vile antithesis !), the passage is eloquent, but can hardly be called orthodox. And it was still worse when Pope undertook to show that even evil passions and vices were part of the harmony; that "a Borgia and a Catiline" were as much a part of the divine order as a plague or an earthquake, and that self-love and lust were essential to social welfare.

Pope's own religious position is characteristic and easily definable. If it is not quite defensible on the strictest principles of plain speaking, it is also certain that we could not condemn him without condemning many of the best and most catholic-spirited of men. The dogmatic system in which he had presumably been educated had softened under the influence of the cultivated thought of the day. Pope, as the member of a persecuted sect, had learnt to share that righteous hatred of bigotry which is the honourable characteristic of his best contemporaries. He considered the persecuting spirit of his own church to be its worst fault.* In the early *Essay on Criticism* he offended some of his own sect by a vigorous denunciation of the doctrine which promotes persecution by limiting salvation to a particular creed. His charitable conviction that a divine element is to be found in all creeds, from that of the "poor Indian" upwards, animates the highest passages in his works. But though he sympathises with a generous toleration, and the specific dogmas of his creed sat very loosely on his mind, he did not consider that an open secession was necessary or even honourable. He called himself a true Catholic, though rather as respectfully sympathising with the spirit of Fenelon than as holding to any dogmatic system. The most dignified letter that he ever wrote was in answer to a suggestion from Atterbury (1717), that he might change his religion upon the death of his father. Pope replies that his worldly interests would be promoted by such a step; and, in fact, it cannot be doubted that Pope might have had a share in the good things then obtainable by successful writers, if he had qualified by taking the oaths. But he adds that such a change would hurt his mother's feelings, and that he was more certain of his duty to promote her happiness than of any speculative tenet whatever. He was sure that he could mean as well in the religion he now professed as in any other; and that being so, he thought that a change even to an equally good religion could not be justified. A similar statement appears in a letter to Swift, in 1729. "I am of the religion of Erasmus, a Catholic. So I live, so shall I die, and hope one day to meet you, Bishop Atterbury, the younger Craggs, Dr. Garth, Dean Berkeley, and Mr. Hutchison in that place to which God of his infinite mercy brings us and everybody." To these Protestants he would doubtless have joined the freethinking Bolingbroke. At a later period he told Warburton, in less elevated language, that the change of his creed would bring him many enemies and do no good to any one.

Pope could feel nobly and act honourably when his morbid vanity did not expose him to some temptation; and I think that in this matter his attitude was in every way creditable. He showed, indeed, the prejudice entertained by many of the rationalist divines for the freethinkers who were a little more outspoken than himself. The deist whose creed was varnished with Christian phrases was often bitter against the deist who rejected the varnish; and Pope

* Spence, p. 364.

put Toland and Tindal into the *Dunciad* as scandalous assailants of all religion. From his point of view it was as wicked to attack any creed as to regard any creed as exclusively true; and certainly Pope was not disposed to join any party which was hated and maligned by the mass of the respectable world. For it must be remembered that, in spite of much that has been said to the contrary, and in spite of the true tendency of much so-called orthodoxy, the profession of open dissent from Christian doctrine was then regarded with extreme disapproval. It might be a fashion, as Butler and others declare, to talk infidelity in cultivated circles; but a public promulgation of unbelief was condemned as criminal, and worthy only of the Grub-street faction. Pope, therefore, was terribly shocked when he found himself accused of heterodoxy. His poem was at once translated, and, we are told, spread rapidly in France, where Voltaire and many inferior writers were introducing the contagion of English freethinking. A solid Swiss pastor and professor of philosophy, Jean Pierre Crousaz (1663–1750), undertook the task of refutation, and published an examination of Pope's philosophy in 1737 and 1738. A serious examination of this bundle of half-digested opinions was in itself absurd. Some years afterwards (1751) Pope came under a more powerful critic. The Berlin Academy of Sciences offered a prize for a similar essay, and Lessing published a short tract called *Pope ein Metaphysiker!* If any one cares to see a demonstration that Pope did not understand the system of Leibnitz, and that the bubble blown by a great philosopher has more apparent cohesion than that of a half-read poet, he may find a sufficient statement of the case in Lessing. But Lessing sensibly protests from the start against the intrusion of such a work into serious discussion; and that is the only ground which is worth taking in the matter.

The most remarkable result of the *Essay on Man*, it may be parenthetically noticed, was its effect upon Voltaire. In 1751 Voltaire wrote a poem on *Natural Law*, which is a comparatively feeble application of Pope's principles. It is addressed to Frederick instead of Bolingbroke, and contains a warm eulogy of Pope's philosophy. But a few years later the earthquake at Lisbon suggested certain doubts to Voltaire as to the completeness of the optimist theory; and, in some of the most impressive verses of the century, he issued an energetic protest against the platitudes applied by Pope and his followers to deaden our sense of the miseries under which the race suffers. Verbally, indeed, Voltaire still makes his bow to the optimist theory, and the two poems appeared together in 1756; but his noble outcry against the empty and complacent deductions which it covers, led to his famous controversy with Rousseau. The history of this conflict falls beyond my subject, and I must be content with this brief reference, which proves, amongst other things, the interest created by Pope's advocacy of the most characteristic doctrines of his time on the minds of the greatest leaders of the revolutionary movement.

Meanwhile, however, Crousaz was translated into English, and

Pope was terribly alarmed. His "guide, philosopher, and friend" had returned to the Continent (in 1735), disgusted with his political failure, but was again in England from June, 1738, to May, 1739. We know not what comfort he may have given to his unlucky disciple, but an unexpected champion suddenly arose. William Warburton (born 1698) was gradually pushing his way to success. He had been an attorney's clerk, and had not received a university education; but his multifarious reading was making him conspicuous, helped by great energy, and by a quality which gave some plausibility to the title bestowed on him by Mallet, "The most impudent man living." In his humble days he had been intimate with Pope's enemies, Concanen and Theobald, and had spoken scornfully of Pope, saying, amongst other things, that he "borrowed for want of genius," as Addison borrowed from modesty, and Milton from pride. In 1736 he had published his first important work, the *Alliance between Church and State;* and in 1738 followed the first instalment of his principal performance, the *Divine Legation.* During the following years he was the most conspicuous theologian of the day, dreaded and hated by his opponents, whom he unsparingly bullied, and dominating a small clique of abject admirers. He is said to have condemned the *Essay on Man* when it first appeared. He called it a collection of the worst passages of the worst authors, and declared that it taught rank atheism. The appearance of Crousaz's book suddenly induced him to make a complete change of front. He declared that Pope spoke "truth uniformly throughout," and complimented him on his strong and delicate reasoning.

It is idle to seek motives for this proceeding. Warburton loved paradoxes, and delighted in brandishing them in the most offensive terms. He enjoyed the exercise of his own ingenuity, and therefore his ponderous writings, though amusing by their audacity and width of reading, are absolutely valueless for their ostensible purpose. The exposition of Pope (the first part of which appeared in December, 1738) is one of his most tiresome performances; nor need any human being at the present day study the painful wire-drawings and sophistries by which he tries to give logical cohesion and orthodox intention to the *Essay on Man.*

If Warburton was simply practising his dialectical skill, the result was a failure. But if he had an eye to certain lower ends, his success surpassed his expectations. Pope was in ecstasies. He fell upon Warburton's neck—or rather at his feet—and overwhelmed him with professions of gratitude. He invited him to Twickenham; met him with compliments which astonished a by-stander, and wrote to him in terms of surprising humility. "You understand me," he exclaims in his first letter, "as well as I do myself; but you express me much better than I could express myself." For the rest of his life Pope adopted the same tone. He sheltered himself behind this burly defender, and could never praise him enough. He declared Mr. Warburton to be the greatest general critic he ever knew, and was glad to install him in the position of champion in

ordinary. Warburton was consulted about new editions; annotated Pope's poems; stood sponsor to the last *Dunciad*, and was assured by his admiring friend that the comment would prolong the life of the poetry. Pope left all his copyrights to this friend, whilst his MSS. were given to Bolingbroke.

When the University of Oxford proposed to confer an honorary degree upon Pope, he declined to receive the compliment, because the proposal to confer a smaller honour upon Warburton had been at the same time thrown out by the University. In fact, Pope looked up to Warburton with a reverence almost equal to that which he felt for Bolingbroke. If such admiration for such an idol was rather humiliating, we must remember that Pope was unable to detect the charlatan in the pretentious but really vigorous writer; and we may perhaps admit that there is something pathetic in Pope's constant eagerness to be supported by some sturdier arm. We find the same tendency throughout his life. The weak and morbidly sensitive nature may be forgiven if its dependence leads to excessive veneration.

Warburton derived advantages from the connexion, the prospect of which, we may hope, was not the motive of his first advocacy. To be recognized by the most eminent man of letters of the day was to receive a kind of certificate of excellence valuable to a man who had not the regular university hall-mark. More definite results followed. Pope introduced Warburton to Allen, and to Murray, afterwards Lord Mansfield. Through Murray he was appointed preacher at Lincoln's Inn, and from Allen he derived greater benefits—the hand of his niece and heiress, and an introduction to Pitt, which gained for him the bishopric of Gloucester.

Pope's allegiance to Bolingbroke was not weakened by this new alliance. He sought to bring the two together, when Bolingbroke again visited England in 1743. The only result was an angry explosion, as, indeed, might have been foreseen; for Bolingbroke was not likely to be well-disposed to the clever person whose dexterous sleight-of-hand had transferred Pope to the orthodox camp; nor was it natural that Warburton, the most combative and insulting of controversialists, should talk on friendly terms to one of his natural antagonists—an antagonist, moreover, who was not likely to have bishoprics in his gift. The quarrel, as we shall see, broke out fiercely over Pope's grave.

CHAPTER VIII.

EPISTLES AND SATIRES.

POPE had tried a considerable number of poetical experiments when the *Dunciad* appeared, but he had not yet discovered in what direction his talents could be most efficiently exerted. By-standers are sometimes acuter in detecting a man's true forte than the performer himself. In 1722 Atterbury had seen Pope's lines upon Addison, and reported that no piece of his writing was ever so much sought after. "Since you now know," he added, "in what direction your strength lies, I hope you will not suffer that talent to be unemployed." Atterbury seems to have been rather fond of giving advice to Pope, and puts on a decidedly pedagogic air when writing to him. The present suggestion was more likely to fall on willing ears than another made shortly before their final separation. Atterbury then presented Pope with a Bible, and recommended him to study its pages. If Pope had taken to heart some of St. Paul's exhortations to Christian charity, he would scarcely have published his lines upon Addison, and English literature would have lost some of its most brilliant pages.

Satire of the kind represented by those lines was so obviously adapted to Pope's peculiar talent, that we rather wonder at his having taken to it seriously at a comparatively late period, and even then having drifted into it by accident rather than by deliberate adoption. He had aimed, as has been said, at being a philosophic and didactic poet. The *Essay on Man* formed part of a much larger plan, of which two or three fragmentary sketches are given by Spence.* Bolingbroke and Pope wrote to Swift in November, 1729, about a scheme then in course of execution. Bolingbroke declares that Pope is now exerting what was eminently and peculiarly his talents above all writers, living or dead, without excepting Horace; whilst Pope explained that this was a "system of ethics in the Horatian way." The language seems to apply best to the poems afterwards called the *Ethic Epistles*, though at this time Pope, perhaps, had not a very clear plan in his head, and was working at different parts simultaneously. The *Essay on Man*, his most distinct scheme, was to form the opening book of his poem. Three others were to treat of knowledge and its limits, of government—ecclesiastical and civil—and

* Spence, pp. 16 48, 137, 315.

of morality. The last book itself involved an elaborate plan. There were to be three epistles about each cardinal virtue—one, for example, upon avarice; another on the contrary extreme of prodigality; and a third upon the judicious mean of a moderate use of riches. Pope told Spence that he had dropped the plan chiefly because his third book would have provoked every Church on the face of the earth, and he did not care for always being in boiling water. The scheme, however, was far too wide and too systematic for Pope's powers. His spasmodic energy enabled him only to fill up corners of the canvas, and from what he did, it is sufficiently evident that his classification would have been incoherent and his philosophy unequal to the task. Part of his work was used for the fourth book of the *Dunciad*, and the remainder corresponds to what are now called the *Ethic Epistles*. These, as they now stand, include five poems. One of these has no real connection with the others. It is a poem addressed to Addison, "occasioned by his dialogue on medals," written (according to Pope) in 1715, and first published in Tickell's edition of Addison's works in 1721. The epistle to Burlington on taste was afterwards called the *Use of Riches*, and appended to another with the same title, thus filling a place in the ethical scheme, though devoted to a very subsidiary branch of the subject. It appeared in 1731. The epistle "of the use of riches" appeared in 1732; that of the knowledge and characters of men in 1733; and that of the characters of women in 1735. The last three are all that would seem to belong to the wider treatise contemplated; but Pope composed so much in fragments that it is difficult to say what bits he might have originally intended for any given purpose.

Another distraction seems to have done more than his fear of boiling water to arrest the progress of the elaborate plan. Bolingbroke coming one day into his room, took up a Horace, and observed that the first satire of the second book would suit Pope's style. Pope translated it in a morning or two, and sent it to press almost immediately (1733). The poem had a brilliant success. It contained, amongst other things, the couplet which provoked his war with Lady Mary and Lord Hervey. This, again, led to his putting together the epistle to Arbuthnot, which includes the bitter attack upon Hervey, as part of a general *apologia pro vita sua*. It was afterwards called the *Prologue to the Satires*. Of his other imitations of Horace, one appeared in 1734 (the second satire of the second book), and four more (the first and sixth epistles of the first book and the first and second of the second book) in 1738. Finally, in 1737, he published two dialogues, first called "1738," and afterwards *The Epilogue to the Satires*, which are in the same vein as the epistle to Arbuthnot. These epistles and imitations of Horace, with the so-called prologue and epilogue, took up the greatest part of Pope's energy during the years in which his intellect was at its best, and show his finest technical qualities. The *Essay on Man* was on hand during the early part of this period, the epistles and satires representing a ramification from the same

inquiry. But the essay shows the weak side of Pope, whilst his most remarkable qualities are best represented by these subsidiary writings. Ths reason will be sufficiently apparent after a brief examination, which will also give occasion for saying what still remains to be said in regard to Pope as a literary artist.

The weakness already conspicuous in the *Essay on Man* mars the effect of the *Ethic Epistles*. His work tends to be rather an aggregation than an organic whole. He was (if I may borrow a phrase from the philologists) an agglutinative writer, and composed by sticking together independent fragments. His mode of composition was natural to a mind incapable of sustained and continuous thought. In the epistles he professes to be working on a plan. The first expounds his favourite theory (also treated in the essay) of a "ruling passion." Each man has such a passion, if only you can find it, which explains the apparent inconsistency of his conduct. This theory, which has exposed him to a charge of fatalism (especially from people who did not very well know what fatalism means), is sufficiently striking for his purpose; but it rather turns up at intervals than really binds the epistle into a whole. But the arrangement of his portrait gallery is really unsystematic; the affectation of system is rather in the way. The most striking characters in the essay on women were inserted (whenever composed) some time after its first appearance, and the construction is too loose to make any interruption of the argument perceptible. The poems contain some of Pope's most brilliant bits, but we can scarcely remember them as a whole. The characters of Wharton and Villiers, of Atossa, of the Man of Ross, and Sir Balaam, stand out as brilliant passages which would do almost as well in any other setting. In the imitations of Horace he is, of course, guided by lines already laid down for him; and he has shown admirable skill in translating the substance as well as the words of his author by the nearest equivalents. This peculiar mode of imitation had been tried by other writers, but in Pope's hands it succeeded beyond all precedent. There is so much congeniality between Horace and Pope, and the social orders of which they were the spokesmen, that he can represent his original without giving us any sense of constraint. Yet even here he sometimes obscures the thread of connexion, and we feel more or less clearly that the order of thought is not that which would have spontaneously arisen in his own mind. So, for example, in the imitation of Horace's first epistle of the first book, the references to the Stoical and Epicurean morals imply a connexion of ideas to which nothing corresponds in Pope's reproduction. Horace is describing a genuine experience, while Pope is only putting together a string of commonplaces. The most interesting part of these imitations are those in which Pope takes advantage of the suggestions in Horace to be thoroughly autobiographical. He manages to run his own experience and feelings into the moulds provided for him by his predecessor. One of the happiest passages is that in which he turns the serious panegyric on Augustus into a bitter irony against

the other Augustus, whose name was George, and who, according to Lord Hervey, was so contrasted with his prototype, that whereas personal courage was the one weak point of the emperor, it was the one strong point of the English king. As soon as Pope has a chance of expressing his personal antipathies or (to do him bare justice) his personal attachments, his lines begin to glow. When he is trying to preach, to be ethical and philosophical, he is apt to fall into mouthing, and to lose his place; but when he can forget his stilts, or point his morality by some concrete and personal instance, every word is alive. And it is this which makes the epilogues, and more especially the prologue to the satires, his most impressive performances. The unity, which is very ill supplied by some ostensible philosophical thesis, or even by the leading-strings of Horace, is given by his own intense interest in himself. The best way of learning to enjoy Pope is to get by heart the epistle to Arbuthnot. That epistle is, as I have said, his *Apologia*. In its some 400 lines he has managed to compress more of his feelings and thoughts than would fill an ordinary autobiography. It is true that the epistle requires a commentator. It wants some familiarity with the events of Pope's life, and many lines convey only a part of their meaning unless we are familiar not only with the events, but with the characters of the persons mentioned. Passages over which we pass carelessly at the first reading then come out with wonderful freshness, and single phrases throw a sudden light upon hidden depths of feeling. It is also true, unluckily, that parts of it must be read by the rule of contraries. They tell us not what Pope really was, but what he wished others to think him, and what he probably endeavoured to persuade himself that he was. How far he succeeded in imposing upon himself is indeed a very curious question which can never be fully answered. There is the strangest mixture of honesty and hypocrisy. Let me, he says, live my own, and die so too—

> "(To live and die is all I have to do)
> Maintain a poet's dignity and ease,
> And see what friends and read what books I please!"

Well, he was independent in his fashion, and we can at least believe that he so far believed in himself. But when he goes on to say that he "can sleep without a poem in his head,

> 'Nor know if Dennis be alive or dead,'"

we remember his calling up the maid four times a night in the dreadful winter of 1740 to save a thought, and the features writhing in anguish as he read a hostile pamphlet. Presently he informs us that "he thinks a lie in prose or verse the same"—only too much the same! and that "if he pleased, he pleased by manly ways." Alas! for the manliness. And yet again, when he speaks of his parents,

> "Unspotted names and venerable long,
> If there be force in virtue or in song."

can we doubt that he is speaking from the heart? We should perhaps like to forget that the really exquisite and touching lines in which he speaks of his mother had been so carefully elaborated.

> "Me let the tender office long engage
> To rock the cradle of declining age,
> With lenient acts extend a mother's breath,
> Make languor smile, and smooth the bed of death,
> Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,
> And keep awhile one parent from the sky!"

If there are more tender and exquisitely expressed lines in the language, I know not where to find them; and yet again I should be glad not to be reminded by a cruel commentator that poor Mrs. Pope had been dead for two years when they were published, and that even this touching effusion has, therefore, a taint of dramatic affectation.

To me, I confess, it seems most probable, though at first sight incredible, that these utterances were thoroughly sincere for the moment. I fancy that under Pope's elaborate masks of hypocrisy and mystification there was a heart always abnormally sensitive. Unfortunately it was as capable of bitter resentment as of warm affection, and was always liable to be misled by the suggestions of his strangely irritable vanity. And this seems to me to give the true key to Pope's poetical as well as to his personal characteristics.

To explain either, we must remember that he was a man of impulses; at one instant a mere incarnate thrill of gratitude or generosity, and in the next of spite or jealousy. A spasm of wounded vanity would make him for the time as mean and selfish as other men are made by a frenzy of bodily fear. He would instinctively snatch at a lie even when a moment's reflection would have shown that the plain truth would be more convenient, and therefore he had to accumulate lie upon lie, each intended to patch up some previous blunder. Though nominally the poet of reason, he was the very antithesis of the man who is reasonable in the highest sense; who is truthful in word and deed because his conduct is regulated by harmonious and invariable principles. Pope was governed by the instantaneous feeling. His emotion came in sudden jets and gushes, instead of a continuous stream. The same peculiarity deprives his poetry of continuous harmony or profound unity of conception. His lively sense of form and proportion enables him, indeed, to fill up a simple framework (generally of borrowed design) with an eye to general effect, as in the *Rape of Lock* or the first *Dunciad*. But even there his flight is short; and when a poem should be governed by the evolution of some profound principle or complex mood of sentiment, he becomes incoherent and perplexed. But, on the other hand, he can conceive admirably all that can be seen at a glance from a single point of view. Though he could not be continuous, he could return again and again to the same point; he could polish, correct, eliminate

superfluities, and compress his meaning more and more closely, till he has constructed short passages of imperishable excellence. This microscopic attention to fragments sometimes injures the connection, and often involves a mutilation of construction. He corrects and prunes too closely. He could, he says, in reference to the *Essay on Man*, put things more briefly in verse than in prose; one reason being that he could take liberties of this kind not permitted in prose writing. But the injury is compensated by the singular terseness and vivacity of his best style. Scarcely any one, as is often remarked, has left so large a proportion of quotable phrases,* and, indeed, to the present he survives chiefly by the current coinage of that kind which bears his image and superscription.

This familiar remark may help us to solve the old problem, whether Pope was, or rather in what sense he was, a poet. Much of his work may be fairly described as rhymed prose, differing from prose not in substance or tone of feeling, but only in the form of expression. Every poet has an invisible audience, as an orator has a visible one, who deserves a great part of the merit of his works. Some men may write for the religious or philosophic recluse, and therefore utter the emotions which come to ordinary mortals in the rare moments when the music of the spheres, generally drowned by the din of the commonplace world, becomes audible to their dull senses. Pope, on the other hand, writes for the wits who never listen to such strains, and moreover writes for their ordinary moods. He aims at giving us the refined and doubly distilled essence of the conversation of the statesmen and courtiers of his time. The standard of good writing always implicitly present to his mind is the fitness of his poetry to pass muster when shown by Gay to his duchess, or read after dinner to a party composed of Swift, Bolingbroke, and Congreve. That imaginary audience is always looking over his shoulder, applauding a good hit, chuckling over illusions to the last bit of scandal, and ridiculing any extravagance tending to romance or sentimentalism.

The limitations imposed by such a condition are obvious. As men of taste, Pope's friends would make their bow to the recognised authorities. They would praise *Paradise Lost*, but a new Milton would be as much out of place with them as the real Milton at the court of Charles II. They would really prefer to have his verses tagged by Dryden, or the *Samson* polished by Pope. They would have ridiculed Wordsworth's mysticism, or Shelley's idealism, as they laughed at the religious "enthusiasm" of Law or Wesley, or the metaphysical subtleties of Berkeley and Hume. They preferred the philosophy of the *Essay on Man*, which might be appropriated by a common-sense preacher, on the rhetoric of *Eloisa and Abelard*, bits of which might be used to excellent effect (as, indeed, Pope himself used the peroration) by a fine gentleman addressing

* To take an obviously uncertain test, I find that in Bartlett's dictionary of familiar quotations, Shakspeare fills 70 pages · Milton, 23; Pope, 18; Wordsworth, 16; and Byron, 15. The rest are nowhere.

his gallantry to a contemporary Sappho. It is only too easy to expose their shallowness, and therefore to overlook what was genuine in their feelings. After all, Pope's eminent friends were no mere tailor's blocks for the display of laced coats. Swift and Bolingbroke were not enthusiasts nor philosophers, but certainly they were no fools. They liked, in the first place, thorough polish. They could appreciate a perfectly turned phrase, an epigram which concentrated into a couplet a volume of quick observations, a smart saying from Rochefoucauld or La Bruyère, which gave an edge to worldly wisdom; a really brilliant utterance of one of those maxims, half true and not over profound, but still presenting one aspect of life as they saw it, which have since grown rather threadbare. This sort of moralising, which is the staple of Pope's epistles upon the ruling passion or upon avarice, strikes us now as unpleasantly obvious. We have got beyond it, and want some more refined analysis and more complex psychology. Take for example, Pope's epistle to Bathurst, which was in hand for two years, and is just 400 lines in length. The simplicity of the remarks is almost comic. Nobody wants to be told now that bribery is facilitated by modern system of credit.

> "Blest paper-credit! last and best supply
> That lends corruption lighter wings to fly!"

This triteness blinds us to the singular felicity with which the observations have been verified, a felicity which makes many of the phrases still proverbial. The mark is so plain that we do scant justice to the accuracy and precision with which it is hit. Yet when we notice how every epithet tells, and how perfectly the writer does what he tries to do, we may understand why Pope extorted contemporary admiration. We may, for example, read once more the familiar passage about Buckingham. The picture, such as it is, could not be drawn more strikingly with fewer lines.

> "In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half-hung,
> The floors of plaister and the walls of dung,
> On once a flock-bed, but repair'd with straw,
> With tape-ty'd curtains never meant to draw,
> The George and Garter dangling from that bed,
> Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red,
> Great Villiers lies! alas, how changed from him,
> That life of pleasure and that soul of whim!
> Gallant and gay in Cliveden's proud alcove,
> The bower of wanton Shrewsbury and love;
> As great as gay, at council in a ring
> Of mimick'd statesmen, and their merry king.
> No wit to flatter left of all his store!
> No fool to laugh at, which he valued more.
> Thus, victor of his health, of fortune, friends,
> And fame, the lord of useless thousands ends."

It is as graphic as a page of Dickens, and has the advantage of being less grotesque, if the sentiment is equally obvious. When

Pope has made his hit, he does not blur the effect by trying to repeat it.

In these epistles, it must be owned that the sentiment is not only obvious but prosaic. The moral maxims are delivered like advice offered by one sensible man to another, not with the impassioned fervour of a prophet. Nor can Pope often rise to that level at which alone satire is transmuted into the higher class of poetry. To accomplish that feat, if, indeed, it be possible, the poet must not simply ridicule the fantastic tricks of poor mortals, but show how they appear to the angels who weep over them. The petty figures must be projected against a background of the infinite, and we must feel the relations of our tiny eddies of life to the oceanic currents of human history. Pope can never rise above the crowd. He is looking at his equals, not contemplating them from the height which reveals their insignificance. The element, which may fairly be called poetical, is derived from an inferior source; but sometimes has passion enough in it to lift him above mere prose.

In one of his most animated passages, Pope relates his desire to

> "Brand the bold front of shameless guilty men,
> Dash the proud gamester in his gilded car,
> Bare the mean heart that lurks beneath a star."

For the moment he takes himself seriously; and, indeed, he seems to have persuaded both himself and his friends that he was really a great defender of virtue. Arbuthnot begged him, almost with his dying breath, to continue his "noble disdain and abhorrence of vice," and, with a due regard to his own safety, to try rather to reform than chastise; and Pope accepts the office ostentatiously. His provocation is "the strong antipathy of good to bad," and he exclaims,—

> "Yes! I am proud—I must be proud—to see
> Men not afraid of God afraid of me.
> Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,
> Yet touch'd and shamed by ridicule alone."

If the sentiment provokes a slight incredulity, it is yet worth while to understand its real meaning; and the explanation is not very far to seek.

Pope's best writing, I have said, is the essence of conversation. It has the quick movement, the boldness and brilliance, which we suppose to be the attributes of the best talk. Of course the apparent facility is due to conscientious labour. In the *Prologue* and *Epilogue* and the best parts of the imitations of Horace, he shows such consummate mastery of his peculiar style, that we forget the monotonous metre. The opening passage, for example, of the *Prologue* is written apparently with the perfect freedom of real dialogue: in fact, it is of course far more pointed and compressed than any dialogue could ever be. The dramatic vivacity with which the whole scene is given shows that he could use metre as the most skilful

performer could command a musical instrument. Pope, indeed, shows, in the *Essay on Criticism*, that his views about the uniformity of sound and sense were crude enough; they are analogous to the tricks by which a musician might decently imitate the cries of animals or the murmurs of a crowd; and his art excludes any attempt at rivalling the melody of the great poets who aim at producing a harmony quite independent of the direct meaning of their words. I am only speaking of the felicity with which he can move in metre without the slightest appearance of restraint, so as to give a kind of idealised representation of the tone of animated verbal intercourse. Whatever comes within this province he can produce with admirable fidelity. Now, in such talks as we imagine with Swift and Bolingbroke, we may be quite sure that there would be some very forcible denunciation of corruption—corruption being of course regarded as due to the diabolical agency of Walpole. During his later years, Pope became a friend of all the Opposition clique, which was undermining the power of the great minister. In his last letters to Swift, Pope speaks of the new circle of promising patriots who were rising around him, and from whom he entertained hopes of the regeneration of this corrupt country. Sentiments of this kind were the staple talk of the circles in which he moved; and all the young men of promise believed, or persuaded themselves to fancy, that a political millenium would follow the downfall of Walpole. Pope, susceptible as always to the influences of his social surroundings, took in all this, and delighted in figuring himself as the prophet of the new era and the denouncer of wickedness in high places. He sees "old England's genius" dragged in the dust, hears the black trumpet of vice proclaiming that "not to be corrupted is the shame," and declares that he will draw the last pen for freedom, and use his "sacred weapon" in truth's defence.

To imagine Pope at his best, we must place ourselves in Twickenham on some fine day, when the long disease has relaxed its grasp for a moment; when he has taken a turn through his garden, and comforted his poor frame with potted lampreys and a glass or two from his frugal pint. Suppose two or three friends to be sitting with him, the stately Bolingbroke or the mercurial Bathurst, with one of the patriotic hopes of mankind, Marchmont or Lyttelton, to stimulate his ardour, and the amiable Spence, or Mrs. Patty Blount to listen reverentially to his morality. Let the conversation kindle into vivacity, and host and guests fall into a friendly rivalry, whetting each other's wits by lively repartee, and airing the little fragments of worldly wisdom which pass muster for profound observation at Court; for a time they talk platitudes, though striking out now and then brilliant flashes, as from the collision of polished rapiers; they diverge, perhaps, into literature, and Pope shines in discussing the secrets of the art to which his whole life has been devoted with untiring fidelity. Suddenly the mention of some noted name provokes a startling outburst of personal invective from Pope; his friends judiciously divert the current of wrath into a new channel, and he becomes for the moment a generous patriot de-

claiming against the growth of luxury; the mention of some sympathising friend brings out a compliment, so exquisitely turned, as to be a permanent title of honour, conferred by genius instead of power; or the thought of his parents makes his voice tremble, and his eyes shine with pathetic softness; and you forgive the occasional affectation which you can never quite forget, or even the occasional grossness or harshness of sentiment which contrasts so strongly with the superficial polish. A genuine report of even the best conversation would be intolerably prosy and unimaginative. But imagine the very pith and essence of such talk brought to a focus, concentrated into the smallest possible space with the infinite dexterity of a thoroughly trained hand, and you have the kind of writing in which Pope is unrivalled; polished prose with occasional gleams of genuine poetry—the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* and the *Epilogue to the Satires.*

One point remains to be briefly noticed. The virtue on which Pope prided himself was correctness; and I have interpreted this to mean the quality which is gained by incessant labour, guided by quick feeling, and always under the strict supervision of common-sense. The next literary revolution led to a depreciation of this quality. Warton (like Macaulay long afterwards) argued that in a higher sense, the Elizabethan poets were really as correct as Pope. Their poetry embodied a higher and more complex law, though it neglected the narrow cut-and-dried precepts recognised in the Queen Anne period. The new school came to express too undiscriminating a contempt for the whole theory and practice of Pope and his followers. Pope, said Cowper, and a thousand critics have echoed his words,

> "Made poetry a mere mechanic art,
> And every warbler had his tune by heart."

Without discussing the wider question, I may here briefly remark that this judgment, taken absolutely, gives a very false impression of Pope's artistic quality. Pope is undoubtedly monotonous. Except in one or two lyrics, such as the *Ode on St. Celia's Day*, which must be reckoned amongst his utter failures, he invariably employed the same metre. The discontinuity of his style, and the strict rules which he adopted, tend to disintegrate his poems. They are a series of brilliant passages, often of brilliant couplets, stuck together in a conglomerate; and as the inferior connecting matter decays, the interstices open and allow the whole to fall into ruin. To read a series of such couplets, each complete in itself, and each so constructed as to allow of a very small variety of form, is naturally to receive an impression of monotony. Pope's antithesis fall into a few common forms, which are repeated over and over again, and seem copy to each other. And, in a sense, such work can be very easily imitated. A very inferior artist can obtain most of his efforts, and all the external qualities of his style. One ten-syllabled rhyming couplet, with the whole sense strictly confined within its limits, and allowing only of such variety as follows

from changing the pauses, is undoubtedly very much like another. And accordingly one may read in any collection of British poets innumerable pages of versification which—if you do not look too close—are exactly like Pope. All poets who have any marked style are more or less imitable; in the present age of revivals, a clever versifier is capable of adopting the manners of his leading contemporaries, or that of any poet from Spenser to Shelley or Keats. The quantity of work scarcely distinguishable from that of the worst passages in Mr. Tennyson, Mr. Browning, and Mr. Swinburne, seems to be limited only by the supply of stationery at the disposal of practised performers. That which makes the imitations of Pope prominent is partly the extent of his sovereignty; the vast number of writers who confined themselves exclusively to his style: and partly the fact that what is easily imitable in him is so conspicuous an element of the whole. The rigid framework which he adopted is easily definable with mathematical precision. The difference between the best work of Pope and the ordinary work of his followers is confined within narrow limits, and not easily perceived at a glance. The difference between blank verse in the hands of its few masters and in the hands of a third-rate imitator strikes the ear in every line. Far more is left to the individual idiosyncrasy. But it does not at all follow, and in fact it is quite untrue, that the distinction which turns on an apparently insignificant element is therefore unimportant. The value of all good work ultimately depends on touches so fine as to elude the sight. And the proof is that although Pope was so constantly imitated, no later and contemporary writer succeeded in approaching his excellence. Young, of the *Night Thoughts*, was an extraordinarily clever writer and talker, even if he did not (as one of his hearers asserts) eclipse Voltaire by the brilliance of his conversation. Young's satires show abundance of wit, and one may not be able to say at a glance in what they are inferior to Pope. Yet they have hopelessly perished, whilst Pope's work remains classical. Of all the crowd of eighteenth-century writers in Pope's manner, only two made an approach to him worth notice. Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* surpasses Pope in general sense of power, and Goldsmith's two poems in the same style have phrases of a higher order than Pope's. But even these poems have not made so deep a mark. In the last generation, Gifford's *Baviad and Mœviad*, and Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, were clever reproductions of the manner; but Gifford is already unreadable, and Byron is pale beside his original; and, therefore, making full allowance for Pope's monotony, and the tiresome prominence of certain mechanical effects, we must, I think, admit that he has after all succeeded in doing with unsurpassable excellence what innumerable rivals have failed to do as well. The explanation is—if the phrase explains anything—that he was a man of genius, or that he brought to a task, not of the highest class, a keenness of sensibility, a conscientious desire to do his very best, and a capacity for taking pains with his work, which enabled him to be as indisputably the first in

his own peculiar line, as our greatest men have been in far more lofty undertakings.

The man who could not publish pastorals without getting into quarrels, was hardly likely to become a professed satirist without giving offence. Besides numerous stabs administered to old enemies, Pope opened some fresh animosities by passages in these poems. Some pointed ridicule was aimed at Montagu, Earl of Halifax, in the *Prologue;* for there can be no doubt that Halifax * was pointed out in the character of Bufo. Pope told a story in later days of an introduction to Halifax, the great patron of the early years of the century, who wished to hear him read his Homer. After the reading Halifax suggested that one passage should be improved. Pope retired rather puzzled by his vague remarks, but, by Garth's advice, returned some time afterwards, and read the same passage without alteration. "Ay, now, Mr. Pope," said Halifax, "they are perfectly right; nothing can be better!" This little incident perhaps suggested to Pope that Halifax was a humbug, and there seems, as already noticed, to have been some difficulty about the desired dedication of the Iliad. Though Halifax had been dead for twenty years when the *Prologue* appeared, Pope may have been in the right in satirising the pompous would-be patron, from whom he had received nothing, and whose pretences he had seen through. But the bitterness of the attack is disagreeable when we add that Pope paid Halifax high compliments in the preface to the Iliad, and boasted of his friendship, shortly after the satire, in the *Epilogue to the Satires.* A more disagreeable affair at the moment was the description, in the *Epistle on Taste*, of Canons, the splendid seat of the Duke of Chandos. Chandos, being still alive, resented the attack, and Pope had not the courage to avow his meaning, which might in that case have been justifiable. He declared to Burlington (to whom the epistle was addressed), and to Chandos, that he had not intended Canons, and tried to make peace by saying in another epistle that "gracious Chandos is beloved at sight." This exculpation, says Johnson, was received by the duke "with great magnanimity, as by a man who accepted his excuse, without believing his professions." Nobody, in fact, believed, and even Warburton let out the secret by a comic oversight. Pope had prophesied in his poem that another age would see the destruction of "Timon's Villa," when laughing Ceres would reassume the land. Had he lived three years longer, said Warburton in a note, Pope would have seen his prophecy fulfilled, namely, by the destruction of Canons. The note was corrected, but the admission that Canons belonged to Timon had been made.

To such accusations Pope had a general answer. He described the type, not the individual. The fault was with the public, who chose to fit the cap. His friend remonstrates in the Epilogue against his personal satire. "Come on, then, Satire, general, unconfined," exclaims the poet,

* Roscoe's attempt at a denial was conclusively answered by Bowles in one of his pamphlets

"Spread thy broad wing and souse on all the kind
* * * * * * * *
Ye reverend atheists. (Friend) Scandal! name them! who?
(Pope) Why, that's the thing you bade me not to do.
Who starved a sister, who forswore a debt,
I never named; the town's inquiring yet.
The pois'ning dame—(F.) You mean— (P.) I don't. (F)
You do.
(P.) See, now, I keep the secret, and not you!"

It must, in fact, be admitted that from the purely artistic point of view Pope is right. Prosaic commentators are always asking, Who is meant by a poet? as though a poem were a legal document. It may be interesting, for various purposes, to know who was in the writer's mind, or what fact suggested the general picture. But we have no right to look outside the poem itself, or to infer anything not within the four corners of the statement. It matters not for such purposes whether there was, or was not, any real person corresponding to Sir Balaam, to whom his wife said, when he was enriched by Cornish wreckers, "live like yourself,"

"When lo! two puddings smoked upon the board,"

in place of the previous one on Sabbath days. Nor does it even matter whether Atticus meant Addison, or Sappho Lady Mary. The satire is equally good, whether its objects are mere names or realities.

But the moral question is quite distinct. In that case we must ask whether Pope used words calculated or intended to fix an imputation upon particular people. Whether he did it in prose or verse, the offence was the same. In many cases he gives real names, and in many others gives unmistakable indications, which must have fixed his satire to particular people. If he had written Addison for Atticus (as he did at first), or Lady Mary for Sappho, or Halifax for Bufo, the insinuation could not have been clearer. His attempt to evade his responsibility was a mere equivocation—a device which he seems to have preferred to direct lying. The character of Bufo might be equally suitable to others; but no reasonable man could doubt that every one would fix it upon Halifax. In some cases—possibly in that of Chandos—he may have thought that his language was too general to apply, and occasionally it seems that he sometimes tried to evade consequences by adding some inconsistent characteristic to his portraits.

I say this, because I am here forced to notice the worst of all the imputations upon Pope's character. The epistle on the characters of women now includes the famous lines on Atossa, which did not appear till after Pope's death.* They were (in 1746) at once applied to the famous Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough; and a story immediately became current that the duchess had paid Pope 1000*l.* to suppress them, but that he preserved them, with a view to their ultimate publication. This story was repeated by Warton and by

* On this subject Mr. Dilke's *Papers of a Critic.*

Walpole; it has been accepted by Mr. Carruthers, who suggests, by way of palliation, that Pope was desirous at the time of providing for Martha Blount, and probably took the sum in order to buy an annuity for her. Now, if the story were proved, it must be admitted that it would reveal a baseness in Pope which would be worthy only of the lowest and most venal literary marauders. No more disgraceful imputation could have been made upon Curll, or Curll's miserable dependents. A man who could so prostitute his talents must have been utterly vile. Pope has sins enough to answer for; but his other meannesses were either sacrifices to his morbid vanity, or (like his offence against Swift, or his lies to Aaron Hill and Chandos) collateral results of spasmodic attempts to escape from humiliation. In money-matters he seems to have been generally independent. He refused gifts from his rich friends, and confuted the rather similar calumny that he had received 500*l.* from the Duke of Chandos. If the account rested upon mere contemporary scandal, we might reject it on the ground of its inconsistency with his known character, and its likeness to other fabrications of his enemies. There is, however, further evidence. It is such evidence as would, at most, justify a verdict of "not proven," in a court of justice. But the critic is not bound by legal rules, and has to say what is the most probable solution, without fear or favor.

I cannot here go into the minute details. This much, however, may be taken as established. Pope was printing a new edition of his works at the time of his death. He had just distributed to his friends some copies of the *Ethic Epistles*, and in those copies the Atossa appeared. Bolingbroke, to whom Pope had left his unpublished papers, discovered it, and immediately identified it with the duchess, who (it must be noticed) was still alive. He wrote to Marchmont, one of Pope's executors, that there could be "no excuse for Pope's design of publishing it after the favour you and I know." This is further explained by a note added in pencil by Marchmont's executor, "1000*l.*;" and the son of this executor, who published the Marchmont papers, says that this was the favour received by Pope from the duchess. This, however, is far from proving a direct bribe. It is, in fact, hardly conceivable that the duchess and Pope should have made such a bargain in direct black and white, and equally inconceivable that two men like Bolingbroke and Marchmont should have been privy to such a transaction, and spoken of it in such terms. Bolingbroke thinks that the favour received laid Pope under an obligation, but evidently does not think that it implied a contract. Mr. Dilke has further pointed out that there are many touches in the character which distinctly apply to the Duchess of Buckingham, with whom Pope had certainly quarrelled, and which will not apply to the Duchess of Marlborough, who had undoubtedly made friends with him during the last years of his life. Walpole again tells a story, partly confirmed by Warton, that Pope had shown the character to each duchess (Warton says only to Marlborough), saying that it was

meant for the other. The Duchess of Buckingham, he says, believed him; the other had more sense, and paid him 1000*l.* to suppress it. Walpole is no trustworthy authority; but the coincidence implies at least that such a story was soon current.

The most probable solution must conform to these data. Pope's Atossa was a portrait which would fit either lady, though it would be naturally applied to the most famous. It seems certain, also that Pope had received some favours (possibly the 1000*l.* on some occasion unknown) from the Duchess of Marlborough, which was felt by his friends to make any attack upon her unjustifiable. We can scarcely believe that there should have been a direct compact of the kind described. If Pope had been a person of duly sensitive conscience he would have suppressed his work. But to suppress anything that he had written, and especially a passage so carefully labored, was always agony to him. He preferred, as we may perhaps conjecture, to settle in his own mind that it would fit the Duchess of Buckingham, and possibly introduce some of the touches to which Mr. Dilke refers. He thought it sufficiently disguised to be willing to publish it whilst the person with whom it was naturally identified was still alive. Had she complained, he would have relied upon those touches, and have equivocated as he equivocated to Hill and Chandos. He always seems to have fancied that he could conceal himself by very thin disguises. But he ought to have known, and perhaps did know, that it would be immediately applied to the person who had conferred an obligation. From that guilt no hypothesis can relieve him; but it is certainly not proved, and seems, on the whole, improbable that he was so base as the concession of his biographers would indicate.

CHAPTER IX.

THE END.

THE last satires were published in 1738. Six years of life still remained to Pope; his intellectual powers were still vigorous, and his pleasure in their exercise had not ceased. The only fruit, however, of his labors during this period was the fourth book of the *Dunciad.* He spent much time upon bringing out new editions of his works, and upon the various intrigues connected with the Swift correspondence. But his health was beginning to fail. The ricketty framework was giving way, and failing to answer the demands of the fretful and excitable brain. In the spring of 1744 the poet was visibly breaking up; he suffered from dropsical asthma, and seems to have made matters worse by putting himself in the hands of a notorious quack—a Dr. Thompson. The end was evidently near as he completed his fifty-sixth year. Friends, old and new, were often in attendance. Above all, Bolingbroke, the venerated friend of thirty years' standing; Patty Blount, the woman whom he loved best; and the excellent Spence, who preserved some of the last words of the dying man. The scene, as he saw it, was pathetic; perhaps it is not less pathetic to us, for whom it has another side as of grim tragic humor.

Three weeks before his death Pope was sending off copies of the *Ethic Epistles*—apparently with the Atossa lines—to his friends. "Here I am, like Socrates," he said, "dispensing my morality amongst my friends just as I am dying." Spence watched him as anxiously as his disciples watched Socrates. He was still sensible to kindness. Whenever Miss Blount came in, the failing spirits rallied for a moment. He was always saying something kindly of his friends, "as if his humainty had outlasted his understanding." Bolingbroke, when Spence made the remark, said that he had never known a man with so tender a heart for his own friends or for mankind. "I have known him," he added, "these thirty years, and value myself more for that man's love than—" and his voice was lost in tears. At moments Pope could still be playful. "Here I am, dying of a hundred good symptoms," he replied to some flattering report, but his mind was beginning to wander. He complained of seeing things as through a curtain. "What's that?" he said pointing to the air, and then, with a smile of great pleasure, added softly, "'twas a vision." His religious sentiments still edified his hearers. "I am certain," he said, "of the soul's being immortal, that I seem to feel it within me, as

it were by intuition;" and early one morning he rose from bed and tried to begin an essay upon immortality, apparently in a state of semi-delirium. On his last day he sacrificed, as Chesterfield rather cynically observes, his cock to Æsculapius. Hooke, a zealous Catholic friend, asked him whether he would not send for the priest. "I do not suppose that it is essential," said Pope, "but it will look right, and I heartily thank you for putting me in mind of it." A priest was brought, and Pope received the last sacraments with great fervour and resignation. Next day, on May 30, 1744, he died so peacefully that his friends could not determine the exact moment of death.

It was a soft and touching end; and yet we must once more look at the other side. Warburton and Bolingbroke both appear to have been at the side of the dying man, and before very long they were to be quarrelling over his grave. Pope's will showed at once that his quarrels were hardly to end with his death. He had quarrelled, though the quarrel had been made up, with the generous Allan, for some cause not ascertainable, except that it arose from the mutual displeasure of Mrs. Allan and Miss Blount. It is pleasant to notice that, in the course of the quarrel, Pope mentioned Warburton, in a letter to Miss Blount, as a sneaking parson; but Warburton was not aware of the flash of sarcasm. Pope, as Johnson puts it, "polluted his will with female resentment." He left a legacy of 150*l.* to Allan, being, as he added, the amount received from his friend—for himself or for charitable purposes: and requested Allan, if he should refuse the legacy for himself, to pay it to the Bath Hospital. Allan adopted this suggestion, saying quietly that Pope had always been a bad accountant, and would have come nearer to the truth if he had added a cypher to the figures.

Another fact came to light, which produced a fiercer outburst. Pope, it was found, had printed a whole edition (1500 copies) of the *Patriot King*, Bolingbroke's most polished work. The motive could have been nothing but a desire to preserve to posterity what Pope considered to be a monument worthy of the highest genius, and was so far complimentary to Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke, however, considered it as an act of gross treachery. Pope had received the work on condition of keeping it strictly private, and showing it to only a few friends. Moreover, he had corrected it, arranged it, and altered or omitted passages according to his own taste, which naturally did not suit the author's. In 1749 Bolingbroke gave a copy to Mallet for publication, and prefixed an angry statement to expose the breach of trust of "a man on whom the author thought he could entirely depend." Warburton rushed to the defence of Pope and the demolition of Bolingbroke. A savage controversy followed, which survives only in the title of one of Bolingbroke's pamphlets, *A Familiar Epistle to the most Impudent Man Living*—a transparent paraphrase for Warburton. Pope's behaviour is too much of a piece with previous underhand transactions, but scarcely deserves further condemnation.

A single touch remains. Pope was buried by his own directions, in a vault in Twickenham Church, near the monument erected to his parents. It contained a simple inscription, ending with the words, "*Parentibus bene merentibus filius fecit.*" To this, as he directed in his will, was to be added simply "*et sibi.*" This was done; but seventeen years afterwards the clumsy Warburton erected in the same church another monument to Pope himself, with this stupid inscription. *Poeta loquitur.*

"*For one who would not be buried in Westminster Abbey.*

Heroes and kings, your distance keep!
In peace let one poor poet sleep
Who never flatter'd folks like you;
Let Horace blush, and Virgil too."

Most of us can tell from experience how grievously our posthumous ceremonials often jar upon the tenderest feelings of survivors. Pope's valued friends seem to have done their best to surround the last scene of his life with painful associations; and Pope, alas! was an unconscious accomplice. To us of a later generation it is impossible to close this strange history without a singular mixture of feelings. Admiration for the extraordinary literary talents, respect for the energy which, under all disadvantages of health and position, turned these talents to the best account; love of the real tender-heartedness which formed the basis of the man's character; pity for the many sufferings to which his morbid sensitiveness exposed him; contempt for the meannesses into which he was hurried; ridicule for the insatiable vanity which prompted his most degrading subterfuges; horror for the bitter animosities which must have tortured the man who cherished them even more than his victims—are suggested simultaneously by the name of Pope. As we look at him in one or other aspect, each feeling may come uppermost in turn. The most abiding sentiment—when we think of him as a literary phenomenon—is admiration for the exquisite skill which enabled him to discharge a function, not of the highest kind, with a perfection rare in any department of literature. It is more difficult to say what will be the final element in our feeling about the man. Let us hope that it may be the pity which, after a certain lapse of years, we may be excused from conceding to the victim of moral as well as physical diseases.

SOUTHEY

BY

EDWARD DOWDEN

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CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD.

No one of his generation lived so completely in and for literature as did Southey. "He is," said Byron, "the only existing entire man of letters." With him literature served the needs both of the material life and of the life of the intellect and imagination; it was his means of earning daily bread, and also the means of satisfying his highest ambitions and desires. This, which was true of Southey at five-and-twenty years of age, was equally true at forty, fifty, sixty. During all that time he was actively at work accumulating, arranging, and distributing knowledge; no one among his contemporaries gathered so large a store from the records of the past; no one toiled with such steadfast devotion to enrich his age; no one occupied so honourable a place in so many provinces of literature. There is not, perhaps, any single work of Southey's the loss of which would be felt by us as a capital misfortune. But the more we consider his total work, its mass, its variety, its high excellence, the more we come to regard it as a memorable, an extraordinary achievement.

Southey himself, however, stands above his works. In subject they are disconnected, and some of them appear like huge fragments. It is the presence of one mind, one character in all, easily recognisable by him who knows Southey, which gives them a vital unity. We could lose the *History of Brazil*, or the *Peninsular War*, or the *Life of Wesley*, and feel that if our possessions were diminished, we ourselves in our inmost being had undergone no loss which might not easily be endured. But he who has once come to know Southey's voice as the voice of a friend, so clear, so brave, so honest, so full of boyish glee, so full of manly tenderness, feels that if he heard that voice no more a portion of his life were gone. To make acquaintance with the man is better than to study the subjects of his books. In such a memoir as the present, to glance over the contents of a hundred volumes, dealing with matters widely remote, would be to wander upon a vast circumference when we ought to strike for the centre. If the reader come

to know Southey as he read and wrote in his library, as he rejoiced and sorrowed among his children, as he held hands with good old friends, as he walked by the lake-side, or lingered to muse near some mountain stream, as he hoped and feared for England, as he thought of life and death and a future beyond the grave, the end of this small book will have been attained.

At the age of forty-six Robert Southey wrote the first of a series of autobiographic sketches; his spirit was courageous, and life had been good to him; but it needed more than his courage to live again in remembrance with so many of the dead; having told the story of his boyhood, he had not the heart to go farther. The autobiography rambles pleasantly into by-ways of old Bath and Bristol life; at Westminster School it leaves him. So far we shall go along with it; for what lies beyond, a record of Southey's career must be brought together from a multitude of letters, published or still remaining in manuscript, and from many and massy volumes in prose and verse, which show how the industrious hours sped by.

Southey's father was a linen-draper of Bristol. He had left his native fields under the Quantock hills to take service in a London shop, but his heart suffered in its exile. The tears were in his eyes one day when a porter went by carrying a hare, and the remembrance suddenly came to him of his rural sports. On his master's death he took a place behind the counter of Britton's shop in Wine Street, Bristol; and when, twelve years later, he opened a shop for himself in the same business, he had, with tender reminiscence, a hare painted for a device upon his windows. He kept his grandfather's sword which had been borne in Monmouth's rebellion; he loved the chimes and quarter-boys of Christ Church, Bristol, and tried, as church-warden, to preserve them. What else of poetry there may have been in the life of Robert Southey the elder is lost among the buried epics of prosaic lives. We cannot suppose that as a man of business he was sharp and shrewd; he certainly was not successful. When the draper's work was done, he whiled away the hours over Felix Farley's Bristol Journal, his only reading. For library some score of books shared with his wine-glasses the small cupboard in the back parlour; its chief treasures were the *Spectator*, the *Guardian*, some eighteenth-century poems, dead even then, and one or two immortal plays.

On Sundays Mr. Southey, then a bachelor, would stroll to Bedminster to dine at the pleasant house of Mrs. Hill---a substantial house to which Edward Hill, gentleman, brought his second wife, herself a widow; a house rich in old English comfort, with its diamond-tiled garden-way and jessamine-covered porch, its wainscoted "best kitchen," its blue room and green room and yellow room, its grapes and greengages and nectarines, its sweet-williams and stocks and syringas. Among these pleasant surroundings the young draper found it natural, on Sabbath afternoons, to make love to pleasant Margaret Hill. "Never," writes her son Robert Southey —"never was any human being blessed with a sweeter temper or a happier disposition." Her face had been marred by the seams of

small-pox, but its brightness and kindness remained; there was a charm in her clear hazel eyes, so good a temper and so alert an understanding were to be read in them. She had not gone to any school except one for dancing, and "her state," declares Southey, "was the more gracious;" her father had, however, given her lessons in the art of whistling; she could turn a tune like a blackbird. From a mother, able to see a fact swiftly and surely, and who knew both to whistle and to dance, Southey inherited that alertness of intellect and that joyous temper, without which he could not have accomplished his huge task-work, never yielding to a mood of rebellion or *ennui.*

After the courtship on Sunday afternoons came the wedding, and before long a beautiful boy was born, who died in infancy. On the 12th of August, 1774, Mrs. Southey was again in the pain of childbirth. "Is it a boy?" she asked the nurse. "Ay, a great ugly boy!" With such salutation from his earliest critic the future poet-laureate entered this world. "God forgive me," his mother exclaimed afterwards, in relating the event, "when I saw what a great red creature it was, covered with rolls of fat, I thought I should never be able to love him." In due time the red creature proved to be a distinctively human child, whose curly hair and sensitive feelings made him a mother's darling. He had not yet heard of sentiment or of Rousseau, but he wept at the pathos of romantic literature, at the tragic fate of the "Children sliding on the ice all on a summer's day," or the too early death of "Billy Pringle's pig," and he would beg the reciters not to proceed. His mother's household cares multiplied, and Southey, an unbreeched boy of three years, was borne away one morning by his faithful foster-mother Patty to be handed over to the tender mercies of a school-mistress. Ma'am Powell was old and grim, and with her lashless eyes gorgonised the new pupil; on the seizure of her hand he woke to rebellion, kicking lustily, and crying, "Take me to Pat! I don't like ye! you've got ugly eyes! take me to Pat, I say!" But soft-hearted Pat hga done home, sobbing.

Mrs. Southey's one weakness was that of submitting too meekly to the tyranny of an imperious half-sister, Miss Tyler, the daughter of Grandmother Hill by her first marriage. For this weakness there were excuses; Miss Tyler was an elder sister by many years; she had property of her own; she passed for a person of fashion, and was still held to be a beauty; above all, she had the advantage of a temper so capricious and violent that to quarrel with her at all might be to lose her sisterly regard for ever. Her struggling sister's eldest son took Aunt Tyler's fancy; it was a part of her imperious kindness to adopt or half-adopt the boy. Aunt Tyler lived in Bath; in no other city could a gentlewoman better preserve health and good looks, or enjoy so much society of distinction on easy but not too ample means; it possessed a charming theatre, and Miss. Tyler was a patron of the drama. To Bath, then, she had brought her portrait by Gainsborough, her inlaid cabinet of ebony, her cherry-wood arm-chair, her mezzotints

after Angelica Kaufmann, her old-maid hoards of this and of that, the woman servant she had saved from the toils of matrimony, and the old man, harmless as one of the crickets which he nightly fed until he died. To Bath Miss Tyler also brought her nephew; and she purchased a copy of the new gospel of education, Rousseau's *Emilius*, in order to ascertain how Nature should have her perfect work with a boy in petticoats. Here the little victim, without companions, without play, without the child's beatitudes of dirt and din, was carefully swathed in the odds and ends of habits and humours which belonged to a maiden lady of a whimsical, irrational, and self-indulgent temper. Miss Tyler, when not prepared for company, wandered about the house—a faded beauty—in the most faded and fluttering of costumes; but in her rags she was spotless. To preserve herself and her worldly gear from the dust, for ever floating and gathering in this our sordid atmosphere, was the business of her life. Her acquaintances she divided into the clean and the unclean—the latter class being much the more numerous. Did one of the unclean take a seat in her best room, the infected chair must be removed to the garden to be aired. But did he seat himself in Miss Tyler's own arm-chair, pressing his abominable person into Miss Tyler's own cushion, then passionate were her dismay and despair. To her favourites she was gracious and high-bred, regaling them with reminiscences of Lady Bateman, and with her views on taste, Shakespeare, and the musical glasses. For her little nephew she invented the pretty recreation of pricking playbills; all capital letters were to be illuminated with pin-holes; it was not a boisterous nor an ungenteel sport. At other times the boy would beguile the hours in the garden, making friends with flowers and insects, or looking wistfully towards that sham castle on Claverton Hill, seat of romantic mystery, but, alas! two miles away, and therefore beyond the climbing powers of a refined gentlewoman. Southey's hardest daily trial was the luxurious morning captivity of his aunt's bed; still at nine, at ten that lady lay in slumber; the small urchin, long perked up and broad awake, feared by sound or stir to rouse her, and would nearly wear his little wits away in plotting re-arrangements of the curtain-pattern, or studying the motes at mazy play in the slant sunbeam. His happiest season was when all other little boys were fast asleep; then, splendid in his gayest "jam," he sat beside Miss Tyler in a front row of the best part of the theatre; when the yawning fits had passed, he was as open-eyed as the oldest, and stared on, filling his soul with the spectacle, till the curtain fell.

The "great red creature," Robert Southey, had now grown into the lean greyhound of his after-life; his long legs wanted to be stirring, and there were childish ambitions already at work in his head. Freedom became dearer to him than the daintiest cage, and when at six he returned to his father's house in Wine Street, it was with rejoicing. Now, too, his aunt issued an edict that the long-legged lad should be breeched; an epoch of life was complete. Wine Street, with its freedom, seemed good; but best of

all was a visit to Grandmother Hill's pleasant house at Bedminster. "Here I had all wholesome liberty, all wholesome indulgence, all wholesome enjoyments; and the delight which I there learnt to take in rural sights and sounds has grown up with me, and continues unabated to this day." And now that scrambling process called education was to begin. A year was spent by Southey as a day-scholar with old Mr. Foot, a dissenting minister, whose unorthodoxy as to the doctrine of the Trinity was in some measure compensated by sound traditional views as to the uses of the cane. Mr. Foot, having given proof on the back of his last and his least pupil of steadfastness in the faith according to Busby, died; and it was decided that the boy should be placed under Thomas Flower, who kept school at Corston, nine miles from Bristol. To a tender mother's heart nine miles seemed a breadth of severance cruel as an Atlantic. Mrs. Southey, born to be happy herself, and to make others happy, had always heretofore met her son with a smile; now he found her weeping in her chamber; with an effort, such as Southey, man and boy, always knew how to make on like occasions, he gulped down his own rising sob, and tried to brighten her sorrow with a smile.

A boy's first night at school is usually not a time of mirth. The heart of the solitary little lad at Corston sank within him. A melancholy hung about the decayed mansion which had once known better days; the broken gateways, the summer-houses falling in ruins, the grass-grown court, the bleakness of the schoolroom, ill-disguised by its faded tapestry, depressed the spirits. Southey's pillow was wet with tears before he fell asleep. The master was at one with his surroundings: he, too, was a piece of worthy old humanity now decayed; he, too, was falling in untimely ruins. From the memory of happier days, from the troubles of his broken fortune, from the vexations of the drunken maid-servant who was now his wife, he took refuge in contemplating the order and motions of the stars. "When he came into his desk, even there he was thinking of the stars, and looked as if he were out of humour, not from ill-nature, but because his calculations were interrupted." Naturally the work of the school, such as it was, fell, for the most part, into the hands of Charley, Thomas Flower's son. Both father and son knew the mystery of that flamboyant penmanship admired by our ancestors, but Southey's handwriting had not yet advanced from the early rounded to the decorated style. His spelling he could look back upon with pride: on one occasion a grand spelling tournament between the boys took place: and little Southey can hardly have failed to overthrow his taller adversaries with the posers, "crystallization" and "coterie." The household arrangements at Corston, as may be supposed, were not of the most perfect kind; Mrs. Flower had so deep an interest in her bottle, and poor Thomas Flower in his planets. The boys each morning washed themselves, or did not, in the brook ankle-deep which ran through the yard. In autumn the brook grew deeper and more swift, and after a gale it would bring within bounds a tribute of

floating apples from the neighbouring orchard. That was a merry day, also in autumn, when the boys were employed to pelt the master's walnut-trees; Southey, too small to bear his part in the battery, would glean among the fallen leaves and twigs, inhaling the penetrating fragrance which ever after called up a vision of the brook, the hillside, and its trees. One school-boy sport—that of "conquering" with snail-shells—seems to have been the special invention of Corston. The snail-shells, not tenantless, were pressed point against point until one was broken in. A great conqueror was prodigiously prized, was treated with honourable distinction, and was not exposed to danger save in great emergencies. One who had slain his hundreds might rank with Rodney, to see whom the boys had marched down to the Globe inn, and for whom they had cheered and waved their Sunday cocked hats as he passed by. So, on the whole, life at Corston had its pleasures. Chief among its pains was the misery of Sunday evenings in winter; then the pupils were assembled in the hall to hear the master read a sermon, or a portion of Stackhouse's *History of the Bible.* "Here," writes Southey, "I sat at the end of a long form, in sight but not within feeling of the fire, my feet cold, my eyelids heavy as lead, and yet not daring to close them—kept awake by fear alone, in total inaction, and under the operation of a lecture more soporific than the strongest sleeping dose." While the boys' souls were thus provided for, there was a certain negligence in matters unspiritual; an alarm got abroad that infection was among them. This hastened the downfall of the school. One night disputing was heard between Charley and his father; in the morning poor Flower was not to be seen, and Charley appeared with a black eye. So came to an end the year at Corston. Southey, aged eight, was brought home, and underwent "a three days' purgatory in brimstone."*

What Southey had gained of book-lore by his two years' schooling was as little as could be; but he was already a lover of literature after a fashion of his own. A friend of Miss Tyler had presented him, as soon as he could read, with a series of Newbery's sixpenny books for children—*Goody Twoshoes, Giles Gingerbread,* and the rest—delectable histories, resplendent in Dutch-gilt paper. The true masters of his imagination, however, were the players and playwrights who provided amusement for the pleasure-loving people of Bath. Miss Tyler was acquainted with Colman, and Sheridan, and Cumberland, and Holcroft; her talk was of actors and authors, and her nephew soon perceived that, honoured as were both classes, the authors were awarded the higher place. His first dreams of literary fame, accordingly, were connected with the drama. "'It is the easiest thing in the world to write a play,' said I to Miss Palmer (a friend of Aunt Tyler's), as we were in a carriage on Redcliffe Hill one day, returning from Bristol to Bedminster. 'Is it, my dear?' was her reply. 'Yes,' I continued, 'for you

* Recollections of Corston, somewhat in the manner of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village,* will be found in Southey's early poem, *The Retrospect.*

know you have only to think what you would say if you were in the place of the characters, and to make them say it.'" With such a canon of dramatic authorship Southey began a play on the continence of Scipio, and actually completed an act and a half. Shakspeare he read and read again; Beaumont and Fletcher he had gone through before he was eight years old. Were they not great theatrical names, Miss Tyler reasoned, and therefore improving writers for her nephew? and Southey had read them unharmed. When he visited his aunt from Corston, she was a guest with Miss Palmer at Bath; a covered passage led to the playhouse, and every evening the delighted child, seated between the two lady-patronesses of the stage, saw the pageantry and heard the poetry. A little later he persuaded a schoolfellow to write a tragedy; Ballard liked the suggestion, but could not invent a plot. Southey gave him a story; Ballard approved, but found a difficulty in devising names for the *dramatis personæ*. Southey supplied a list of heroic names: they were just what Ballard wanted—but he was at a loss to know what the characters should say. "I made the same attempt," continued Southey, "with another schoolfellow, and with no better success. It seemed to me very odd that they should not be able to write plays as well as to do their lessons."

The ingenious Ballard was an ornament of the school of William Williams, whither Southey was sent as a day-boarder after the catastrophe of Corston. Under the care of this kindly, irascible, little, bewigged old Welshman, Southey remained during four years. Williams was not a model schoolmaster, but he was a man of character and of a certain humorous originally. In two things he believed with all the energy of his nature—in his own spelling-book printed for his own school, and in the Church Catechism. Latin was left to the curate; when Southey reached Virgil, old Williams, delighted with classical attainments rare among his pupils, thought of taking the boy into his own hands, but his little Latin had faded from his brain; and the curate himself seemed to have reached his term in the *Tityre tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi*, so that to Southey, driven round and round the pastoral paddock, the names of Tityrus and Melibœus became for ever after symbols of *ennui*. No prosody was taught: "I am," said Southey, "at this day as liable to make a false quantity as any Scotchman." The credit, however, is due to Williams of having discovered in his favourite pupil a writer of English prose. One day each boy of a certain standing was called upon to write a letter on any subject he pleased: never had Southey written a letter except the formal one dictated at Corston which began with "Honoured Parents." He cried for perplexity and vexation, but Williams encouraged him, and presently a description of Stonehenge filled his slate. The old man was surprised and delighted. A less amiable feeling possessed Southey's schoolfellows: a plan was forthwith laid for his humiliation—could he tell them, fine scholar that he was, what the letters *i. e.* stand for? Southey, never lacking in courage, drew a bow at a venture, for John the Evangelist.

The old Welshman, an original himself, had an odd following of friends and poor retainers. There was the crazy rhymester known as "Dr. Jones;" tradition darkly related that a dose of cantharides administered by waggish boys of a former generation had robbed him of his wits. "The most celebrated *improvisatore* was never half so vain of his talent as this queer creature, whose little figure of some five-feet-two I can perfectly call to mind, with his suit of rusty black, his more rusty wig, and his old cocked hat. Whenever he entered the schoolroom he was greeted with a shout of welcome." There was also Pullen, the breeches-maker—a glorious fellow, brimful of vulgarity, prosperity, and boisterous good-nature; above all, an excellent hand at demanding a half-holiday. A more graceful presence, but a more fleeting, was that of Mrs. Estan, the actress, who came to learn from the dancing-master her *minuet de la cour* in *The Belle's Stratagem.* Southey himself had to submit to lessons in dancing. Tom Madge, his constant partner, had limbs that went every way; Southey's limbs would go no way; the spectacle presented by their joint endeavours was one designed for the pencil of Cruikshank. In the art of reading aloud Miss Tyler had herself instructed her nephew, probably after the manner of the most approved tragedy queens. The grand style did not please honest Williams. "Who taught you to read?" he asked, scornfully. "My aunt," answered Southey. "Then give my compliments to your aunt, and tell her that my old horse that has been dead these twenty years, could have taught you as well" —a message which the nephew, with the appalling frankness of youth, delivered, and which was never forgotten.

While Southey was at Corston, his grandmother died; the old lady with the large, clear, brown, bright eyes, seated in her garden, was no more to be seen, and the Bedminster house, after a brief occupation by Miss Tyler, was sold. Miss Tyler spoke of Bristol society with a disdainful sniff; it was her choice to wander for a while from one genteel watering-place to another. When Williams gave Southey his first summer holidays, he visited his aunt at Weymouth. The hours spent there upon the beach were the most spiritual hours of Southey's boyhood; he was for the first time in face of the sea—the sea vast, voiceful, and mysterious. Another epoch-making event occurred about the same time; good Mrs. Dolignon, his aunt's friend, gave him a book—the first which became his very own since that present of the toy-books of Newbery. It was Hoole's translation of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata;* in it a world of poetical adventure was opened to the boy. The notes to Tasso made frequent reference to Ariosto; Bull's Circulating Library at Bath—a Bodleian to Southey—supplied him with the version, also by Hoole, of the *Orlando Furioso;* here was a forest of old romance in which to lose himself. But a greater discovery was to come; searching the notes again, Southey found mention made of Spenser, and certain stanzas of Spenser's chief poem were quoted. "Was the *Faerie Queene* on Bull's shelves?" "Yes," was the answer; "they had it, but it was in obsolete lan-

guage, and the young gentleman would not understand it." The young gentleman, who had already gone through Beaumont and Fletcher, was not daunted; he fell to with the keenest relish, feeling in Spenser the presence of something which was lacking in the monotonous couplets of Hoole, and charming himself unaware with the music of the stanza. Spenser, "not more sweet than pure, and not more pure than wise,"

"High-priest of all the Muses' mysteries," *

was henceforth accepted by Southey as his master.

When Miss Tyler had exhausted her friends' hospitality, and had grown tired of lodgings, she settled in a pleasant suburban nook at Bristol; but having a standing quarrel with Thomas Southey, her sister's brother-in-law, she would never set foot in the house in Wine Street, and she tried to estrange her nephew, as far as possible, from his natural home. Her own brother William, a half-witted creature, she brought to live with her. "The Squire," as he was called, was hardly a responsible being, yet he had a sort of *half-saved* shrewdness, and a memory stored with old saws, which, says Southey, "would have qualified him, had he been born two centuries earlier, to have worn motley, and figured with a cap and bells and a bauble in some baron's hall." A saying of his, "Curses are like young chickens, they always come home to roost," was remembered by Southey in after years; and when it was turned into Greek by Coleridge, to serve as motto to *The Curse of Kehama*, a mysterious reference was given—*Αποφθ. Ανεκ. του Γυλτελ. του Μητ.* With much beer-swilling and tobacco-chewing, premature old age came upon him. He would sit for hours by the kitchen fire, or, on warm days, in the summer-house, his eyes intently following the movements of the neighbours. He loved to play at marbles with his nephew, and at loo with Miss Tyler; most of all, he loved to be taken to the theatre. The poor Squire had an affectionate heart; he would fondle children with tenderness, and at his mother's funeral his grief was overwhelming. A companion of his own age Southey found in Shadrach Weekes, the boy of all work, a brother of Miss Tyler's maid. Shad and his young master would scour the country in search of violet and cowslip roots, and the bee and fly orchis, until wood and rock by the side of the Avon had grown familiar and had grown dear; and now, instead of solitary pricking of play-bills, Southey set to work, with the help of Shad, to make and fit up such a theatre for puppets as would have been the pride even of Wilhelm Meister.

But fate had already pronounced that Southey was to be poet, and not player. Tasso and Ariosto and Spenser claimed him, or so he dreamed. By this time he had added to his epic cycle Pope's *Homer* and Mickle's *Lusiad*. That prose romance, embroidered with sixteenth-century affectations, but with a true chivalric senti-

* Carmen Nuptiale: Proem, 18.

ment at its heart, Sidney's *Arcadia*, was also known to him. He had read Arabian and mock-Arabian tales; he had spent the pocket-money of many weeks on a Josephus, and he had picked up from Goldsmith something of Greek and Roman history. So breathed upon by poetry, and so furnished with erudition, Southey, at twelve years old, found it the most natural thing in the world to become an epic poet. His removal from the old Welshman's school having been hastened by that terrible message which Miss Tyler could not forgive, Southey, before proceeding to Westminster, was placed for a year under a clergyman, believed to be competent to carry his pupils beyond Tityrus and Melibœus. But, except some skill in writing English themes, little was gained from this new tutor The year, however, was not lost. "I do not remember," Southey writes, "in any part of my life to have been so conscious of intellectual improvement . . . an improvement derived not from books or instruction, but from constantly exercising myself in English verse. "Arcadia" was the title of his first dream-poem: it was to be grafted upon the *Orlando Furioso*, with a new hero, and in a new scene; this dated from his ninth or tenth year, and some verses were actually composed. The epic of the Trojan Brutus and that of King Richard III. were soon laid aside, but several folio sheets of an *Egbert* came to be written. The boy's pride and ambition were solitary and shy. One day he found a lady, a visitor of Miss Tyler's, with the sacred sheets of *Egbert* in her hand; her compliments on his poem were deeply resented; and he determined henceforth to write his epics in a private cipher. Heroic epistles, translations from Latin poetry, satires, descriptive and moral pieces, a poem in dialogue exhibiting the story of the Trojan war, followed in rapid succession; last, a "Cassibelan," of which three books were completed. Southey, looking back on these attempts, notices their deficiency in plan, in construction. "It was long before I acquired this power—not fairly, indeed, till I was about five or six and thirty; and it was gained by practice, in the course of which I learnt to perceive wherein I was deficient."

One day in February, 1788, a carriage rumbled out of Bath, containing Miss Palmer, Miss Tyler, and Robert Southey, now a tall, lank boy with high-poised head, brown curling hair, bright hazel eyes, and an expression of ardour and energy about the lips and chin. The ladies were on their way to London for some weeks' diversion, and Robert Southey was on his way to school at Westminster. For a while he remained an inconvenient appendage of his aunt's, wearying of the great city, longing for Shad and the carpentry, and the Gloucester meadows and the Avon cliffs, and the honest eyes and joyous bark of poor Phillis. April the first—ominous morning—arrived; Southey was driven to Dean's Yard; his name was duly entered; his boarding-house determined; his tutor chosen; farewells were said, and he found himself in a strange world, alone.

CHAPTER II.

WESTMINSTER, OXFORD, PANTISOCRACY, AND MARRIAGE.

Of Southey during his four years at Westminster we know little; his fragment of autobiography, having brought him to the school, soon comes to an untimely close; and for this period we possess no letters. But we know that these were years which contributed much to form his intellect and character; we know that they were years of ardour and of toil; and it is certain that now, as heretofore, his advance was less dependent on what pastors and masters did for him than on what he did for himself. The highest scholarship—that which unites precision with breadth, and linguistic science with literary feeling—Southey never attained in any foreign tongue, except perhaps in the Portuguese and the Spanish. Whenever the choice lay between pausing to trace out a law of language, or pushing forward to secure a good armful of miscellaneous facts, Southey preferred the latter. With so many huge structures of his own in contemplation, he could not gather too much material, nor gather it too quickly. Such fortitude as goes to make great scholars he possessed; his store of patience was inexhaustible; but he could be patient only in pursuit of his proper objects. He could never learn a language in regular fashion; the best grammar, he said, was always the shortest. Southey's acquaintance with Greek never got beyond that stage at which Greek, like fairy gold, is apt to slip away of a sudden unless kept steadfastly in view; nearly all the Greek he had learnt at Westminster he forgot at Oxford. A monkish legend in Latin of the Church or a mediæval Latin chronicle he could follow with the run of the eye; but had he at any season of his manhood been called on to write a page of Latin prose, it would probably have resembled the French in which he sometimes sportively addressed his friends by letter, and in which he uttered himself valiantly while travelling abroad.

Southey brought to Westminster an imagination stored with the marvels and the beauty of old romance. He left it skilled in the new sentiment of the time—a sentiment which found in Werther and Eloisa its dialect, high-pitched, self-conscious, rhapsodical, and not wholly real. His bias for history was already marked before he entered the school; but his knowledge consisted of a few

clusters of historical facts grouped around the subjects of various projected epics, and dotting at wide distances and almost at random the vast expanse of time. Now he made acquaintance with that book which, more than any other, displays the breadth, the variety, and the independence of the visible lives of nations. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* leaves a reader cold who cares only to quicken his own inmost being by contact with what is most precious in man's spiritual history; one chapter of Augustine's *Confessions*, one sentence of the *Imitation*—each a live coal from off the altar—will be of more worth to such an one than all the mass and laboured majesty of Gibbon. But one who can gaze with a certain impersonal regard on the spectacle of the world will find the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, more than almost any other single book, replenish and dilate the mind. In it Southey viewed for the first time the sweep, the splendour, the coils, the mighty movement, of the stream of human affairs.

Southey's ambition on entering Westminster was to have the friendship of the youths who had acted in the last Westminster play, and whose names he had seen in the newspaper. Vain hope! for they, already preparing to tie their hair in tails, were looking onward to the great world, and had no glance to cast on the unnoted figures of the under-fourth. The new-comer, according to a custom of the school, was for a time effaced, ceasing to exist as an individual entity, and being known only as "shadow" of the senior boy chosen to be "substance" to him during his noviciate. Southey accepted his effacement the more willingly because George Strachey, his substance, had a good face and a kindly heart; unluckily—Strachey boarding at home—they were parted each night. A mild young aristocrat, joining little with the others, was head of the house; and Southey, unprotected by his chief, stood exposed to the tyranny of a fellow-boarder bigger and brawnier than himself, who would souse the ears of his sleeping victim with water, or on occasions let fly the porter-pot or the poker at his head. Aspiring beyond these sallies to a larger and freer style of humour, he attempted one day to hang Southey out of an upper window by the leg; the pleasantry was taken ill by the smaller boy, who offered an effectual resistance, and soon obtained his remove to another chamber. Southey's mature judgment of boarding-school life was not, on the whole, favourable; yet to Westminster he owed two of his best and dearest possessions—the friendship of C. W. W. Wynn, whose generous loyalty alone made it possible for Southey to pursue literature as his profession, and the friendship, no less precious, of Grosvenor Bedford, lasting green and fresh from boyhood until both were white-haired, venerable men.

Southey's interest in boyish sports was too slight to beguile him from the solitude needful for the growth of a poet's mind. He had thoughts of continuing Ovid's Metamorphoses; he planned six books to complete the Faery Queen, and actually wrote some cantos; already the subject of *Madoc* was chosen. And now a gigantic conception, which at a later time was to bear fruit in such poems

as *Thalaba* and *Kehama*, formed itself in his mind. "When I was a schoolboy at Westminster," he writes, "I frequented the house of a schoolfellow who has continued till this day to be one of my most intimate and dearest friends. The house was so near Dean's Yard that it was hardly considered as being out of our prescribed bounds; and I had free access to the library, a well-stored and pleasant room . . . looking over the river. There many of my truant hours were delightfully spent in reading Picart's *Religious Ceremonies*. The book impressed my imagination strongly; and before I left school I had formed the intention of exhibiting all the more prominent and poetical forms of mythology, which have at any time obtained among mankind, by making each the groundwork of an heroic poem." Southey's huge design was begotten upon his *pia mater* by a folio in a library. A few years earlier Wordsworth, a boy of fourteen, walking between Hawkshead and Ambleside, noticed the boughs and leaves of an oak-tree intensely outlined in black against a bright western sky. "That moment," he says, "was important in my poetical history, for I date from it my consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poets of any age or country, so far as I was acquainted with them; and I made a resolution to supply in some degree the deficiency." Two remarkable incidents in the history of English poetry, and each with something in it of a typical character.

At Westminster Southey obtained his first literary profits—the guerdon of the silver penny to which Cowper alludes in his *Table-Talk*. Southey's penny—exchanged for current coin in the proportion of six to one by the mistress of the boarding-house—was always awarded for English composition. But his fame among his schoolfellows was not of an early or sudden growth. In the year of Southey's entrance, some of the senior boys commenced a weekly paper called *The Trifler*. It imitates, with some skill, the periodical essay of the post-Johnsonian period: there is the wide-ranging discussion on the Influence of Liberty on Genius; there is the sprightly sketch of Amelia, a learned Lady; there is the moral diatribe on Deists, a Sect of Infidels most dangerous to Mankind; there are the letters from Numa and from Infelix; there is the Eastern apologue, beginning, "In the city of Bassora lived Zaydor. the son of Al-Zored." Southey lost no time in sending to the editor his latest verses; a baby sister, Margaretta, had just died, and Southey expressed in elegy a grief which was real and keen. "The Elegy signed B. is received"—so Mr. Timothy Touchstone announced on the Saturday after the manuscript had been dropped into the penny post. The following Saturday—anxiously expected—brought no poem, but another announcement: "The Elegy by B. must undergo some Alterations; a Liberty I must request all my Correspondents to permit me to take." "After this," says Southey, "I looked for its appearance anxiously, but in vain." Happily no one sought to discover B., or supposed that he was one with the curly-headed boy of the under-fourth.

If authorship has its hours of disappointment, it has compensating moments of glory and of joy. *The Trifler*, having lived to the age of ten months, deceased. In 1792 Southey, now a great boy, with Strachey, his sometime "substance," and his friends Wynn and Bedford, planned a new periodical of ill-omened name, *The Flagellant*. "I well remember my feelings," he writes, "when the first number appeared. . . . It was Bedford's writing, but that circumstance did not prevent me from feeling that I was that day borne into the world as an author; and if ever my head touched the stars while I walked upon the earth, it was then. . . . In all London there was not so vain, so happy, so elated a creature as I was that day." From that starry altitude he soon descended. The subject of an early number of *The Flagellant* was flogging; the writer was Robert Southey. He was full of Gibbon at the time, and had caught some of Voltaire's manner of poignant irony. Rather for disport of his wits than in the character of a reformer, the writer of number five undertook to prove from the ancients and the Fathers that flogging was an invention of the devil. During Southey's life the devil received many insults at his hands; his horns, his hoofs, his teeth, his tail, his moral character, were painfully referred to; and the devil took it, like a sensible fiend, in good part. Not so Dr. Vincent; the preceptorial dignity was impugned by some unmannerly brat; a bulwark of the British Constitution was at stake. Dr. Vincent made haste to prosecute the publisher for libel. Matters having taken unexpectedly so serious a turn, Southey came forward, avowed himself the writer, and, with some sense of shame in yielding to resentment so unwarranted and so dull, he offered his apology. The head-master's wrath still held on its way, and Southey was privately expelled.

All Southey's truant hours were not passed among folios adorned with strange sculptures. In those days even St. Peter's College, Westminster, could be no little landlocked bay—silent, secure, and dull. To be in London was to be among the tides and breakers of the world. Every post brought news of some startling or significant event. Now it was that George Washington had been elected first President of the American Republic; now that the States-General were assembled at Versailles; now that Paris, delivered from her nightmare towers of the Bastille, breathed free; now that Brissot was petitioning for dethronement. The main issues of the time were such as to try the spirits. Southey, who was aspiring, hopeful, and courageous, did not hesitate in choosing a side; a new dawn was opening for the world, and should not his heart have its portion in that dawn?

The love of our own household which surrounds us like the air, and which seems inevitable as our daily meat and drink, acquires a strange preciousness when we find that the world can be harsh. The expelled Westminster boy returned to Bristol, and faithful Aunt Tyler welcomed him home; Shad did not avert his face, and Phillis looked up at him with her soft spaniel eyes. But Bristol also had its troubles; the world had been too strong for the

poor linen-draper in Wine Street; he had struggled to maintain his business, but without success; his fortune was now broken, and his heart broke with it. In some respects it was well for Southey that his father's affairs gave him definite realities to attend to; for, in the quiet and vacancy of the days in Miss Tyler's house, his heart took unusual heats and chills, and even his eager verse-writing could not allay the excitement nor avert the despondent fit. When Michaelmas came, Southey went up to Oxford to matriculate; it was intended that he should enter at Christ Church, but the dean had heard of the escapade at Westminster; there was a laying of big-wigs together over that adventure, and the young rebel was rejected; to be received, however, by Balliol College. But to Southey it mattered little at the time whether he were of this college or of that; a summons had reached him to hasten to Bristol that he might follow his father's body to the grave, and now his thoughts could not but cling to his mother in her sorrow and her need.

"I left Westminster," says Southey, "in a perilous state—a heart full of poetry and feeling, a head full of Rousseau and Werther, and my religious principles shaken by Gibbon: many circumstances tended to give me a wrong bias, none to lead me right, except adversity, the wholesomest of all discipline." The young republican went up to chambers in Rat Castle—since departed—near the head of Balliol Grove, prepared to find in Oxford the seat of pedantry, prejudice, and aristocracy; an airy sense of his own enlightenment and emancipation possessed him. He has to learn to pay respect to men "remarkable only for great wigs and little wisdom." He finds it "rather disgraceful at the moment when Europe is on fire with freedom—when man and monarch are contending—to sit and study Euclid and Hugo Grotius." Beside the enthusiasm proper in Southey's nature, there was at this time an enthusiasm prepense. He had learnt from his foreign masters the language of hypersensibility; his temperament was nervous and easily wrought upon; his spirit was generous and ardent. Like other youths with a facile literary talent before finding his true self, he created a number of artificial selves, who uttered for him his moralisings and philosophisings, who declaimed for him on liberty, who dictated long letters of sentimental platitudes, and who built up dream-fabrics of social and political reforms chiefly for the pleasure of seeing how things might look in "the brilliant colours of fancy, nature, and Rousseau." In this there was no insincerity, though there was some unreality. "For life," he says, "I have really a very strong predilection," and the buoyant energy within him delayed the discovery of the bare facts of existence; it was so easy and enjoyable to become in turn sage, reformer, and enthusiast. Or perhaps we ought to say that all this time there was a real Robert Southey, strong, upright, ardent, simple: and although this was quite too plain a person to serve the purposes of epistolary literature, it was he who gave their cues to the various ideal personages. This, at least, may be affirmed—all Southey's unrealities were of a pure and

generous cast; never was his life emptied of truth and meaning, and made in the deepest degree phantasmal by a secret shame lurking under a fair show. The youth Milton, with his grave upbringing, was happily not in the way of catching the trick of sentimental phrases; but even Milton at Cambridge, the lady of his College, was not more clean from spot or blemish than was Southey amid the vulgar riot and animalisms of young Oxford.

Two influences came to the aid of Southey's instinctive modesty, and confirmed him in all that was good. One was his friendship with Edmund Seward, too soon taken from him by death. The other was his discipleship to a great master of conduct. One in our own day has acknowledged the largeness of his debt to

> "That halting slave, who in Nicopolis
> Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son
> Clear'd Rome of what most shamed him."

Epictetus came to Southey precisely when such a master was needed; other writers had affected him through his imagination, through his nervous sensibility; they had raised around him a luminous haze; they had plunged him deeper in illusion. Now was heard the voice of a conscience speaking to a conscience; the manner of speech was grave, unfigured, calm; above all, it was real, and the words bore in upon the hearer's soul with a quiet resistlessness. He had allowed his sensitiveness to set up what excitements it might please in his whole moral frame; he had been squandering his emotions; he had been indulging in a luxury and waste of passion. Here was a tonic and a styptic. Had Southey been declamatory about freedom? The bondsman Epictetus spoke of freedom also, and of how it might be obtained. Epictetus, like Rousseau, told of a life according to nature; he commended simplicity of manners. But Rousseau's simplicity, notwithstanding that homage which he paid to the will, seemed to heat the atmosphere with strange passion, seemed to give rise to new curiosities and refinements of self-conscious emotion. Epictetus showed how life could be simplified, indeed, by bringing it into obedience to a perfect law. Instead of a quietism haunted by feverish dreams—duty, action, co-operation with God. "Twelve years ago," wrote Southey in 1806, "I carried Epictetus in my pocket till my very heart was ingrained with it, as a pig's bones become red by feeding him upon madder. And the longer I live, and the more I learn, the more am I convinced that stoicism, properly understood, is the best and noblest of systems." Much that Southey gained from Stoicism he kept throughout his whole life, tempered, indeed, by the influences of a Christian faith, but not lost. He was no metaphysician, and a master who had placed metaphysics first and morals after would hardly have won him for a disciple; but a lofty ethical doctrine spoke to what was deepest and most real in his nature. To trust in an over-ruling Providence, to accept the disposal of events not in our own power with a

strenuous loyalty to our Supreme Ruler, to hold loose by all earthly possessions even the dearest, to hold loose by life itself while putting it to fullest use—these lessons he first learnt from the Stoic slave, and he forgot none of them. But his chief lesson was the large one of self-regulation, that it is a man's prerogative to apply the reason and the will to the government of conduct and to the formation of character.

By the routine of lectures and examinations Southey profited little; he was not driven into active revolt, and that was all. His tutor, half a democrat, surprised him by praising America, and asserting the right of every country to model its own forms of government. He added, with a pleasing frankness which deserves to be imitated, "Mr. Southey, you won't learn anything by my lectures, sir; so, if you have any studies of your own, you had better pursue them." Of all the months of his life, those passed at Oxford, Southey declared, were the most unprofitable. "All I learnt was a little swimming . . . and a little boating. . . . I never remember to have dreamt of Oxford—a sure proof how little it entered into my moral being; of school, on the contrary, I dream perpetually." The miscellaneous society of workers, idlers, dunces, bucks, men of muscle and men of money, did not please him; he lacked what Wordsworth calls "the congregating temper that pervades our unripe years." One or two friends he chose, and grappled them to his heart; above all, Seward, who abridged his hours of sleep for sake of study—whose drink was water, whose breakfast was dry bread; then, Wynn and Lightfoot. With Seward he sallied forth, in the Easter vacation, 1793, for a holiday excursion; passed, with "the stupidity of a democratic philosopher," the very walls of Blenheim, without turning from the road to view the ducal palace; lingered at Evesham, and wandered through its ruined Abbey, indulging in some passable mediæval romancing; reached Worcester and Kidderminster. "We returned by Bewdley. There is an old mansion, once Lord Herbert's, now mouldering away, in so romantic a situation, that I soon lost myself in dreams of days of yore: the tapestried room—the listed fight—the vassal-filled hall—the hospitable fire—the old baron and his young daughter—these formed a most delightful day-dream." The youthful democrat did not suspect that such day-dreams were treasonable—a hazardous caressing of the wily enchantress of the past; in his pocket he carried Milton's *Defence*, which may have been his amulet of salvation. Many and various elements could mingle in young brains a-seethe with revolution and romanticism. The fresh air and quickened blood at least put Southey into excellent spirits. "We must walk over Scotland; it will be an adventure to delight us all the remainder of our lives: we will wander over the hills of Morven, and mark the driving blast, perchance bestrodden by the spirit of Ossian!"

Among visitors to the Wye, in July, 1793, were William Wordsworth, recently returned from France, and Robert Southey, holiday-making from Oxford; they were probably unacquainted with each

other at that time even by name. Wordsworth has left an undying memorial of his tour in the poem written near Tintern Abbey, five years later. Southey was drawing a long breath before he uttered himself in some thousands of blank verses. The father of his friend Bedford resided at Brixton Causeway, about four miles on the Surrey side of London; the smoke of the great city hung heavily beyond an intervening breadth of country: shady lanes led to the neighbouring villages; the garden was a sunny solitude where flowers opened and fruit grew mellow, and bees and birds were happy. Here Southey visited his friend; his nineteenth birthday came; on the following morning he planted himself at the desk in the garden summer-house; morning after morning quickly passed; and by the end of six weeks *Joan of Arc*, an epic poem in twelve books, was written. To the subject Southey was attracted primarily by the exalted character of his heroine; but apart from this it possessed a twofold interest for him: England, in 1793, was engaged in a war against France—a war hateful to all who sympathized with the Republic; Southey's epic was a celebration of the glories of French patriotism, a narrative of victory over the invader. It was also chivalric and mediæval; the sentiment which was transforming the word Gothic, from a term of reproach to a word of vague yet mastering fascination, found expression in the young poet's treatment of the story of Joan of Arc. Knight and hermit, prince and prelate, doctors seraphic and irrefragable with their pupils, meet in it; the castle and the cathedral confront one another: windows gleam with many-coloured light streaming through the rich robes of saint and prophet; a miracle of carven tracery branches overhead; upon the altar burns the mystic lamp.

The rough draft of *Joan* was hardly laid aside when Southey's sympathies with the revolutionary movement in France, strained already to the utmost point of tension, were fatally rent. All his faith, all his hope, were given to the Girondin party; and from the Girondins he had singled out Brissot as his ideal of political courage, purity and wisdom. Brissot, like himself, was a disciple of Jean Jacques; his life was austere; he had suffered on behalf of freedom. On the day when the Bastille was stormed, its keys were placed in Brissot's hand; it was Brissot who had determined that war should be declared against the foreign foes of the Republic. But now the Girondins—following hard upon Marie Antoinette—were in the death-carts; they chanted their last hymn of liberty, ever growing fainter while the axe lopped head after head: and Brissot was among the martyrs (October 31, 1793). Probably no other public event so deeply affected Southey. "I am sick of the world," he writes, "and discontented with every one in it. The murder of Brissot has completely harrowed up my faculties. . . . . I look round the world, and everywhere find the same spectacle—the strong tyrannising over the weak, man and beast. . . . . There is no place for virtue."

After this, though Southey did not lose faith in democratic

principles, he averted his eyes for a time from France: how could he look to butchers who had shed blood which was the very life of liberty, for the realisation of his dreams? And whither should he look? Had he but ten thousand republicans like himself, they might repeople Greece and expel the Turk. Being but one, might not Cowley's fancy, a cottage in America, be transformed into a fact: "three rooms . . . and my only companion some poor negro whom I have bought on purpose to emancipate?" Meanwhile he occupied a room in Aunt Tyler's house, and, instead of swinging the axe in some forest primeval, amused himself with splitting a wedge of oak in company with Shad, who might, perhaps, serve for the emancipated negro. Moreover, he was very diligently driving his quill: "I have finished transcribing *Joan*, and have bound her in marble paper with green ribbons, and am now copying all my remainables to carry to Oxford. Then once more a clear field, and then another epic poem, and then another." Appalling announcement! "I have accomplished a most arduous task, transcribing all my verses that appear worth the trouble, except letters. Of these I took one list—another of my pile of stuff and nonsense—and a third of what I have burnt and lost; upon an average 10,000 verses are burnt and lost; the same number preserved, and 15,000 worthless." Such sad mechanic exercise dulled the ache in Southey's heart; still "the visions of futurity," he finds, "are dark and gloomy, and the only ray that enlivens the scene beams on America."

To Balliol Southey returned; and if the future of the world seemed perplexing, so also did his individual future. His school and college expenses were borne by Mrs. Southey's brother, the Rev. Herbert Hill, chaplain to the British Factory at Lisbon. In him the fatherless youth found one who was both a friend and a father. Holbein's portrait of Sir Thomas More in his best years might have passed for that of Mr. Hill; there was the same benign thoughtfulness in his aspect, the same earnest calm, the same brightness and quietness, the same serene and cheerful strength. He was generous and judicious, learned and modest, and his goodness carried authority with it. Uncle Hill's plan had been that Southey, like himself, should become an English clergyman. But though he might have preached from an Unitarian pulpit, Southey could not take upon himself the vows of a minister of the Church of England. It would have instantly relieved his mother had he entered into orders. He longed that this were possible, and went through many conflicts of mind, and not a little anguish. "God knows I would exchange every intellectual gift which He has blessed me with, for implicit faith to have been able to do this:" but it could not be. To bear the reproaches, gentle yet grave, of his uncle was hard: to grieve his mother was harder. Southey resolved to go to the anatomy school, and fit himself to be a doctor. But he could not overcome his strong repugnance to the dissecting-room; it expelled him whether he would or no; and all the time literature, with still yet audible voice, was summoning him.

Might he not obtain some official employment in London, and also pursue his true calling? Beside the desire of pleasing his uncle and of aiding his mother, the Stoic of twenty had now a stronger motive for seeking some immediate livelihood. "I shall joyfully bid adieu to Oxford," he writes, " . . . and, when I know my situation, unite myself to a woman whom I have long esteemed as a sister, and for whom I now indulge a warmer sentiment." But Southey's reputation as a dangerous Jacobin stood in his way; how could his Oxford overseers answer for the good behaviour of a youth who spoke scornfully of Pitt?

The shuttles of the fates now began to fly faster, and the threads to twist and twine. It was June of the year 1794. A visitor from Cambridge was one day introduced to Southey; he seemed to be of an age near his own; his hair, parted in the middle, fell wavy upon his neck; his face, when the brooding cloud was not upon him, was bright with an abundant promise—a promise vaguely told in lines of the sweet full lips, in the luminous eyes, and the forehead that was like a god's. This meeting of Southey and Coleridge was an event which decided much in the careers of both. In the summer days, and in youth, the meeting-time of spirits, they were drawn close to one another. Both had confessions to make, with many points in common; both were poets; both were democrats; both had hoped largely from France, and the hopes of both had been darkened; both were uncertain what part to take in life. We do not know whether Coleridge quickly grew so confidential as to tell of his recent adventure as Silas Titus Comberbatch of the 15th Light Dragoons. But we know that Coleridge had a lively admiration for the tall Oxford student—a person of distinction, so dignified, so courteous, so quick of apprehension, so full of knowledge, with a glance so rapid and piercing, with a smile so good and kind. And we know that Coleridge lost no time in communicating to Southey the hopes that were nearest to his heart.

Pantisocracy, word of magic, summed up these hopes. Was it not possible for a number of men like themselves, whose way of thinking was liberal, whose characters were tried and incorruptible, to join together and leave this old world of falling thrones and rival anarchies, for the woods and wilds of the young republic? One could wield an axe, another could guide a plough. Their wants would be simple and natural; their toil need not be such as the slaves of luxury endure; where possessions were held in common, each would work for all; in their cottages the best books would have a place; literature and science, bathed anew in the invigorating stream of life and nature, could not but rise reanimated and purified. Each young man should take to himself a mild and lovely woman for his wife; it would be her part to prepare their innocent food, and tend their hardy and beautiful race. So they would bring back the patriarchal age, and in the sober evening of life they would behold "colonies of independence in the undivided dale of industry." All the arguments in favour of such a scheme

could not be set forth in a conversation, but Coleridge, to silence objectors, would publish a quarto volume of Pantisocracy and Aspheterism.

Southey heartily assented; his own thoughts had, with a vague forefeeling, been pointing to America; the unpublished epic would serve to buy a spade, a plough, a few acres of ground; he could assuredly split timber; he knew a mild and lovely woman for whom he indulged a warmer sentiment than that of a brother. Robert Lovell, a Quaker, an enthusiast, a poet, married to the sister of Southey's Edith, would surely join them; so would Burnett, his college friend; so, perhaps, would the admirable Seward. The long vacation was at hand. Being unable to take orders, or to endure the horrors of the dissecting-room, Southey must no longer remain a burden upon his uncle; he would quit the university and prepare for the voyage.

Coleridge departed to tramp it through the romantic valleys and mountains of Wales. Southey joined his mother, who now lived at Bath, and her he soon persuaded—as a handsome and eloquent son can persuade a loving mother—that the plan of emigration was feasible; she even consented to accompany her boy. But her aunt—an *esprit borné*—was not to hear a breath of Pantisocracy; still less would it be prudent to confess to her his engagement to Miss Edith Fricker. His Edith was penniless, and therefore all the dearer to Southey; her father had been an unsuccessful manufacturer of sugar-pans. What would Miss Tyler, the friend of Lady Bateman, feel? What words, what gestures, what acts, would give her feelings relief?

When Coleridge, after his Welsh wanderings, arrived in Bristol, he was introduced to Lovell, to Mrs. Lovell, to Mrs. Lovell's sisters, Edith and Sarah, and Martha and Elizabeth. Mrs. Lovell was doubtless already a pantisocrat; Southey had probably not found it difficult to convert Edith; Sarah, the elder sister, who was wont to look a mild reproof on over-daring speculations, seriously inclined to hear of pantisocracy from the lips of Coleridge. All members of the community were to be married. Coleridge now more than ever saw the propriety of that rule; he was prepared to yield obedience to it with the least possible delay. Burnett, also a pantisocrat, must also marry. Would Miss Martha Fricker join the community as Mrs. George Burnett? The lively little woman refused him scornfully; if he wanted a wife in a hurry, let him go elsewhere. The prospects of the reformers, this misadventure notwithstanding, from day to day grew brighter. "This Pantisocratic scheme," so writes Southey, "has given me new life, new hope, new energy; all the faculties of my mind are dilated." Coleridge met a friend of Priestley's. But a few days since he had toasted the great doctor at Bala, thereby calling forth a sentiment from the loyal parish apothecary: "I gives a sentiment, gemmen! May all republicans be gulloteened!" The friend of Priestley's said that without doubt the doctor would join them. An American land-agent told them that for twelve men 2000*l.* would

do. "He recommends the Susquehanna, from its excessive beauty and its security from hostile Indians." The very name—Susquehanna—sounded as if it were the sweetest of rippling rivers. Money, it is true, as Southey admits, "is a huge evil;" but now they are twenty-seven, and by resolute men this difficulty can be overcome.

It was evening of the 17th of October, a dark and gusty evening of falling rain and miry ways. Within Aunt Tyler's house in College Green, Bristol, a storm was bursting; she had heard it all at last—Pantisocracy, America, Miss Fricker. Out of the house he must march; there was the door; let her never see his face again. Southey took his hat, looked for the last time in his life at his aunt, then stepped out into the darkness and the rain. "Why, sir, you ben't going to Bath at this time of night and in this weather!" remonstrated poor Shadrach. Even so; and with a friendly whisper master and man parted. Southey had not a penny in his pocket, and was lightly clad. At Lovell's he luckily found his father's great-coat; he swallowed a glass of brandy and set off on foot. Misery makes one acquainted with strange road-fellows. On the way he came upon an old man, drunk, and hardly able to stumble forward through the night: the young pantisocrat, mindful of his fellow-man, dragged him along nine miles amid rain and mire. Then, with weary feet, he reached Bath, and there was his mother to greet him with surprise, and to ask for explanations. "Oh, Patience, Patience, thou hast often helped poor Robert Southey, but never didst thou stand him in more need than on Friday, the 17th of October, 1794."

For a little longer the bow of hope shone in the West, somewhere over the Susquehanna, and then it gradually grew faint and faded. Money, that huge evil, sneered its cold negations. The chiefs consulted, and Southey proposed that a house and farm should be taken in Wales, where their principles might be acted out until better days enabled them to start upon their voyage. One pantisocrat, at least, could be happy with Edith, brown bread, and wild Welsh raspberries. But Coleridge objected; their principles could not be fairly tested under the disadvantage of an effete and adverse social state surrounding them; besides, where was the purchase-money to come from? how were they to live until the gathering of their first crops? It became clear that the realisation of their plan must be postponed. The immediate problem was, How to raise 150*l.*? With such a sum they might both qualify by marriage for membership in the pantisocratical community. After that, the rest would somehow follow.

How, then, to raise 150*l.*? Might they not start a new magazine and become joint editors? The *Telegraph* had offered employment to Southey. "Hireling writer to a newspaper! 'Sdeath! 'tis an ugly title; but *n'importe.* I shall write truth, and only truth." The offer, however, turned out to be that of a reporter's place; and his troublesome guest, honesty, prevented his contributing to *The True Briton.* But he and Coleridge could at least write

poetry, and perhaps publish it with advantage to themselves; and they could lecture to a Bristol audience. With some skirmishing lectures on various political subjects of immediate interest, Coleridge began; many came to hear them, and the applause was loud. Thus encouraged, he announced and delivered two remarkable courses of lectures—one, *A Comparative View of the English Rebellion under Charles I. and the French Revolution;* the other, *On Revealed Religion: its Corruptions and its Political Views.* Southey did not feel tempted to discuss the origin of evil or the principles of revolution. He chose as his subject a view of the course of European history from Solon and Lycurgus to the American War. His hearers were pleased by the graceful delivery and unassuming self-possession of the young lecturer, and were quick to recognise the unusual range of his knowledge, his just perception of facts, his ardour and energy of conviction. One lecture Coleridge begged permission to deliver in Southey's place—that on the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Roman Empire. Southey consented, and the room was thronged; but no lecturer appeared; they waited; still no lecturer. Southey offered an apology, and the crowd dispersed in no happy temper. It is likely, adds that good old gossip Cottle, who tells the story, "that at this very moment Mr. Coleridge might have been found at No. 48 College Street, composedly smoking his pipe, and lost in profound musings on his divine Susquehanna."

The good Cottle—young in 1795, a publisher, and unhappily a poet—rendered more important service to the two young men than that of smoothing down their ruffled tempers after this incident. Southey, in conjunction with Lovell, had already published a slender volume of verse. The pieces by Southey recall his schoolboy joys and sorrows, and tell of his mother's tears, his father's death, his friendship with "Urban," his love of "Ariste," lovely maid! his delight in old romance, his discipleship to Rousseau. They are chiefly of interest as exhibiting the diverse literary influences to which a young writer of genius was exposed in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Here the couplet of Pope reappears, and hard by the irregular ode as practised by Akenside, the elegy as written by Gray, the unrhymed stanza which Collins's *Evening* made a fashion, the sonnet to which Bowles had lent a meditative grace, and the rhymeless measures imitated by Southey from Sayers, and afterwards made popular by his *Thalaba.* On the last page of this volume appear "Proposals for publishing by subscription *Joan of Arc;*" but subscriptions came slowly in. One evening Southey read for Cottle some books of *Joan.* "It can rarely happen," he writes, "that a young author should meet with a bookseller as inexperienced and as ardent as himself." Cottle offered to publish the poem in quarto, to make it the handsomest book ever printed in Bristol, to give the author fifty copies for his subscribers, and fifty pounds to put forthwith into his purse. Some dramatic attempts had recently been made by Southey, *Wat Tyler*, of which we shall hear more at a later date, and the *Fall of*

Robespierre, undertaken by Coleridge, Lovell, and Southey, half in sport—each being pledged to produce an act in twenty-four hours. These were now forgotten, and all his energies were given to revising and in part recasting *Joan*. In six weeks his epic had been written; its revision occupied six months.

With summer came a great sorrow, and in the end of autumn a measureless joy. "He is dead," Southey writes, "my dear Edmund Seward! after six weeks' suffering. . . . . You know not, Grosvenor, how I loved poor Edmund: he taught me all that I have of good. . . . There is a strange vacancy in my heart. . . . I have lost a friend, and such a one!" And then characteristically come the words: "I will try, by assiduous employment, to get rid of very melancholy thoughts." Another consolation Southey possessed: during his whole life he steadfastly believed that death is but the removal of a spirit from earth to heaven; and heaven for him meant a place where cheerful familiarity was natural, where, perhaps, he himself would write more epics and purchase more folios. As Baxter expected to meet among the saints above Mr. Hampden and Mr. Pym, so Southey counted upon the pleasure of having long talks with friends, of obtaining introductions to eminent strangers; above all, he looked forward to the joy of again embracing his beloved ones:

> "Often together have we talked of death;
> How sweet it were to see
> All doubtful things made clear;
> How sweet it were with powers
> Such as the Cherubim
> To view the depth of Heaven!
> O Edmund! thou hast first
> Begun the travel of eternity."

Autumn brought its happiness pure and deep. Mr. Hill had arrived from Lisbon; once again he urged his nephew to enter the church; but for one of Southey's opinions the church-gate "is perjury," nor does he even find church-going the best mode of spending his Sunday. He proposed to choose the law as his profession. But his uncle had heard of Pantisocracy, Aspheterism, and Miss Fricker, and said the law could wait; he should go abroad for six months, see Spain and Portugal, learn foreign languages, read foreign poetry and history, rummage among the books and manuscripts his uncle had collected in Lisbon, and afterwards return to his Blackstone. Southey, straightforward in all else, in love became a Machiavel. To Spain and Portugal he would go; his mother wished it; Cottle expected from him a volume of travels; his uncle had but to name the day. Then he sought Edith, and asked her to promise that before he departed she would become his wife: she wept to think that he was going, and yet persuaded him to go; consented, finally, to all that he proposed. But how was he to pay the marriage fees and buy the wedding-ring? Often this autumn he had walked the streets

dinnerless, no pence in his pocket, no bread and cheese at his lodgings, thinking little, however, of dinner, for his head was full of poetry and his heart of love. Cottle lent him money for the ring and the license—and Southey in after-years never forgot the kindness of his honest friend. He was to accompany his uncle, but Edith was first to be his own; so she may honourably accept from him whatever means he can furnish for her support. It was arranged with Cottle's sisters that she should live with them, and still call herself by her maiden name. On the morning of the 14th of November, 1795—a day sad, yet with happiness underlying all sadness—Robert Southey was married in Redcliffe Church, Bristol, to Edith Fricker. At the church door there was a pressure of hands, and they parted with full hearts, silently—Mrs. Southey to take up her abode in Bristol, with the wedding-ring upon her breast, her husband to cross the sea. Never did woman put her happiness in more loyal keeping.

So by love and by poetry, by Edith Fricker and by Joan of Arc, Southey's life was being shaped. Powers most benign leaned forward to brood over the coming years to bless them. It was decreed that his heart should be no homeless wanderer; that, as seasons went by, children should be in his arms and upon his knees: it was also decreed that he should become a strong toiler among books. Now Pantisocracy looked faint and far; the facts plain and enduring of the actual world took hold of his adult spirit. And Coleridge complained of this, and did not come to bid his friend farewell.

CHAPTER III.

ANDERINGS, 1795—1803.

THROUGH pastoral Somerset, through Devon amid falling leaves, then over rough Cornish roads, the coach brought Southey —cold, hungry, and dispirited—to Falmouth. No packet there for Corunna; no packet starting before December 1st. The gap of time looked colourless and dreary, nor could even the philosophy of Epictetus left him quite above "the things independent of the will." After a comfortless and stormy voyage, on the fifth morning the sun shone, and through a mist the barren cliffs of Galicia, with breakers tumbling at their feet, rose in sight. Who has not experienced, when first he has touched a foreign soil, how nature purges the visual nerve with lucky euphrasy? The shadowy streets, the latticed houses, the fountains, the fragments of Moorish architecture, the Jewish faces of the men, the lustrous eyes of girls, the children gaily bedizened, the old witch-like women with brown shrivelled parchment for skin, told Southey that he was far from home. Nor at night was he permitted to forget his whereabouts; out of doors cats were uttering soft things in most vile Spanish; beneath his blanket, familiars, blood-thirsty as those of the Inquisition, made him their own. He was not sorry when the crazy coach, drawn by six mules, received him and his uncle, and the journey eastward began to the shout of the muleteers and the clink of a hundred bells.

Some eighteen days were spent upon the road to Madrid. Had Southey not left half his life behind him in Bristol, those December days would have been almost wholly pleasurable. As it was, they yielded a large possession for the inner eye, and gave his heart a hold upon this new land which, in a certain sense, became for ever after the land of his adoption. It was pleasant when, having gone forward on foot, he reached the crest of some mountain road, to look down on broken waters in the glen, and across to the little white-walled convent amid its chestnuts, and back to the dim ocean; there, on the summit, to rest with the odour of furze blossoms and the tinkle of goats in the air, and, while the mules wound up the long ascent, to turn all this into hasty rhymes, ending with the thought of peace, and love, and Edith. Then the bells audibly

approaching, and the loud-voiced muleteer consigning his struggling team to Saint Michael and three hundred devils; and then on to remoter hills, or moor and swamp, or the bridge flung across the ravine, or the path above a precipice, with mist and moonlight below. And next day some walled city, with its decaying towers and dim piazza; some church, with its balcony of ghastly skulls; some abandoned castle, or jasper-pillared Moorish gateway and gallery. Nor were the little inns and baiting-houses without compensations for their manifold discomforts. The Spanish country folk were dirty and ignorant, but they had a courtesy unknown to English peasants; Southey would join the group around the kitchen fire, and be, as far as his imperfect speech allowed, one with the rustics, the carriers, the hostess, the children, the village barber, the familiar priest, and the familiar pigs. When chambermaid Josepha took hold of his hair and gravely advised him never to tie it or to wear powder, she meant simple friendliness, no more. In his recoil from the dream of human perfectibility, Southey allowed himself at times to square accounts with common-sense by a cynical outbreak; but, in truth, he was a warm-hearted lover of his kind. Even feudalism and Catholicism had not utterly degraded the Spaniard. Southey thanks God that the pride of chivalry is extinguished; his Protestant zeal becomes deep-dyed in presence of our Lady of Seven Sorrows and the Holy Napkin. "Here, in the words of Mary Wollstonecraft," he writes, "'the serious folly of Superstition stares every man of sense in the face.'" Yet Spain has inherited tender and glorious memories; by the river Ezla he recalls Montemayor's wooing of his Diana; at Tordesillas he muses on the spot where Queen Joanna watched by her husband's corpse, and where Padilla, Martyr of Freedom, triumphed and endured. At length the travellers, accompanied by Manuel, the most vivacious and accomplished of barbers, drew near Madrid, passed the miles of kneeling washerwomen and outspread clothes on the river banks, entered the city, put up at the Cruz de Malta, and were not ill-content to procure once more a well-cooked supper and a clean bed.

Southey pursued with ardour his study of the Spanish language, and could soon talk learnedly of its great writers. The national theatres, and the sorry spectacle of bullock-teasing, made a slighter impression upon him than did the cloisters of the new Franciscan Convent. He had been meditating his design of a series of poems to illustrate the mythologies of the world; here the whole portentous history of St. Francis was displayed upon the walls. "Do they believe all this, sir?" he asked Mr. Hill. "Yes, and a great deal more of the same kind," was the reply. "My first thought was . . . here is a mythology not less wild and fanciful than any of those upon which my imagination was employed, and one which ought to be included in my ambitious design." Thus Southey's attention was drawn for the first time to the legendary and monastic history of the Church.

His Majesty of Spain, with his courtesans and his courtiers, possibly also with the Queen and her gallants, had gone westward to meet the Portuguese court upon the borders. As a matter of course, therefore, no traveller could hope to leave Madrid, every carriage, cart, horse, mule, and ass being embargoed for the royal service. The followers of the father of his people numbered seven thousand, and they advanced, devouring all before them, neither paying nor promising to pay, leaving a broad track behind as bare as that stripped by an army of locusts, with here a weeping cottager, and there a smoking cork-tree, for a memorial of their march. Ten days after the king's departure, Mr. Hill and his nephew succeeded in finding a buggy with two mules, and made their escape, taking with them their own larder. Their destination was Lisbon, and as they drew towards the royal party, the risk of enbargo added a zest to travel hardly less piquant than that imparted by the neighbourhood of bandits. It was mid-January; the mountains shone with snow; but olive-gathering had begun in the plains; violets were in blossom, and in the air was a genial warmth. As they drove south and west, the younger traveller noted for his diary the first appearance of orange-trees, the first myrtle, the first fence of aloes. A pressure was on their spirits till Lisbon should be reached; they would not linger to watch the sad procession attending a body uncovered upon its bier; they left behind the pilgrims to our Lady's Shrine, pious bacchanals half naked and half drunk, advancing to the tune of bagpipe and drum; then the gleam of waters before them, a rough two hours' passage, and the weary heads were on their pillows, to be roused before morning by an earthquake, with its sudden trembling and cracking.

Life at Lisbon was not altogether after Southey's heart. His uncle's books and manuscripts were indeed a treasure to explore, but Mr. Hill lived in society as well as in his study, and thought it right to give his nephew the advantage of new acquaintances. What had the author of *Joan of Arc*, the husband of Edith Southey, the disciple of Rousseau, of Godwin, the Stoic, the tall, dark-eyed young man with a certain wildness of expression in his face, standing alone or discoursing earnestly on Industrial Communities of Women—what had he to do with the *inania regna* of the drawing-room? He cared not for cards nor for dancing; he possessed no gift for turning the leaves on the harpsichord, and saying the happy word at the right moment. Southey, indeed, knew as little as possible of music, and all through his life acted on the principle that the worthiest use of sound without sense had been long ago discovered by schoolboys let loose from their tasks; he loved to create a chaos of sheer noise after those hours during which silence had been interrupted only by the scraping of his pen. For the rest, the sallies of glee from a mountain brook, the piping of a thrush from the orchard-bough, would have delighted him more than all the trills of Sontag or the finest rapture of Malibran. It was with some of the superiority and seriousness of a philosopher

just out of his teens that he unbent to the frivolities of the Lisbon drawing-rooms.

But if Lisbon had its vexations, the country, the climate, the mountains with their streams and coolness, the odorous gardens, Tagus flashing in the sunlight, the rough bar glittering with white breakers, and the Atlantic, made amends. When April came, Mr. Hill moved to his house at Cintra, and the memories and sensations "felt in the blood and felt along the heart," which Southey brought with him to England, were especially associated with this delightful retreat. "Never was a house more completely secluded than my uncle's: it is so surrounded with lemon-trees and laurels as nowhere to be visible at the distance of ten yards. . . . A little stream of water runs down the hill before the door, another door opens into a lemon-garden, and from the sitting-room we have just such a prospect over lemon-trees and laurels to an opposite hill as, by promising a better, invites us to walk. . . . On one of the mountain eminences stands the Penha Convent, visible from the hills near Lisbon. On another are the ruins of a Moorish castle, and a cistern, within its boundaries, kept always full by a spring of purest water that rises in it. From this elevation the eye stretches over a bare and melancholy country to Lisbon on the one side, and on the other to the distant Convent of Mafra, the Atlantic bounding the greater part of the prospect. I never beheld a view that so effectually checked the wish of wandering."

"Lisbon, from which God grant me a speedy deliverance," is the heading of one of Southey's letters; but when the day came to look on Lisbon perhaps for the last time, his heart grew heavy with happy recollection. It was with no regretful feeling, however, that he leaped ashore, glad, after all, to exchange the sparkling Tagus and the lemon groves of Portugal for the mud-encumbered tide of Avon and a glimpse of British smoke. "I intend to write a hymn," he says, "to the Dii Penates." His joy in reunion with his wife was made more rare and tender by finding her in sorrow; the grief was also peculiarly his own—Lovell was dead. He had been taken ill at Salisbury, and by his haste to reach his fireside had heightened the fever which hung upon him. Coleridge, writing to his friend Poole at this time, expresses himself with amiable but inactive piety: "The widow is calm, and amused with her beautiful infant. We are all become more religious than we were. God be ever praised for all things." Southey also writes characteristically: "Poor Lovell! I am in hopes of raising something for his widow by publishing his best pieces, if only enough to buy her a harpsichord. . . . Will you procure me some subscribers?" No idle conceit of serving her; for Mrs. Lovell with her child, as well as Mrs. Coleridge with her children, at a later time became members of the Southey household. Already—though Coleridge might resent it—Southey was willing to part with some vague enthusiasms which wandered in the inane of a young man's fancy, for the sake of simple loyalties and manly tendernesses. No one was more boyish-hearted than Southey at fifty; but even at twenty-two it

would not have been surprising to find gray hairs sprinkling the dark. "How does time mellow down our opinions! Little of that ardent enthusiasm which so lately fevered my whole character remains. I have contracted my sphere of action within the little circle of my own friends, and even my wishes seldom stray beyond it. . . . I want a little room to arrange my books in, and some Lares of my own." This domestic feeling was not a besotted contentment in narrow interests; no man was more deeply moved by the political changes in his own country, by the national upspring in the Spanish peninsula, than Southey. While seated at his desk, his intellect ranged through dim centuries of the past. But his heart needed an abiding-place, and he yielded to the bonds—strict and dear—of duty and of love which bound his own life to the lives of others.

The ambitious quarto in which Cottle prided himself not a little was now published (1796). To assign its true place to *Joan of Arc*, we must remember that narrative poetry in the eighteenth century was of the slenderest dimensions and the most modest temper. Poems of description and sentiment seemed to leave no place for poems of action and passion. Delicately finished cabinet pictures, like Shenstone's *Schoolmistress* and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, had superseded fresco. The only great English epic of that century is the prose Odyssey of which Mr. Tom Jones is the hero. That estimable London merchant, Glover, had indeed written an heroic poem containing the correct number of Books; its subject was a lofty one; the sentiments were generous, the language dignified; and inasmuch as Leonidas was a patriot and a Whig, true Whigs and patriots bought and praised the poem. But Glover's poetry lacks the informing breath of life. His second poem, *The Athenaid*, appeared after his death, and its thirty books fell plumb into the water of oblivion. It looked as if the narrative poem *à longue haleine* was dead in English literature. Cowper had given breadth, with a mingled gaiety and gravity, to the poetry of description and sentiment; Burns had made the air tremulous with snatches of pure and thrilling song; the *Lyrical Ballads* were not yet. At this moment, from a provincial press, *Joan of Arc* was issued. As a piece of romantic narrative it belongs to the new age of poetry; in sentiment it is revolutionary and republican; its garment of style is of the eighteenth century. Nowhere, except it be in the verses which hail "Inoculation, lovely Maid!" does the personified abstraction, galvanised into life by printer's type and poet's epithet, stalk more at large than in the unfortunate ninth book, the Vision of the Maid, which William Taylor, of Norwich, pronounced worthy of Dante. The critical reviews of the time were liberal in politics, and the poem was praised and bought. "Brissot murdered" was good, and "the blameless wife of Roland" atoned for some offences against taste; there was also that notable reference to the "Almighty people" who "from their tyrant's hand dashed down the iron rod." The delegated maid is a creature overflowing with Rousseauish sensibility; virtue, inno-

cence, the peaceful cot, stand over against the wars and tyranny of kings, and the superstition and cruelty of prelates. Southey himself soon disrelished the youthful heats and violences of the poem; he valued it as the work which first lifted him into public view; and, partly out of a kind of gratitude, he rehandled the *Joan* again and again. It would furnish an instructive letter to a young writer to note how its asperities were softened, its spasm subdued, its swelling words abated. Yet its chief interest will be perceived only by readers of the earlier text. To the second book Coleridge contributed some four hundred lines, where Platonic philosophy and protests against the Newtonian hypothesis of æther are not very appropriately brought into connexion with the shepherd-girl of Domremi. These lines disappeared from all editions after the first.*

The neighbourhood of Bristol was for the present Southey's home. The quickening of his blood by the beauty, the air and sun, of Southern Europe, the sense of power imparted by his achievement in poetry, the joy of reunion with his young wife, the joy, also, of solitude among rocks and woods, combined to throw him into a vivid and creative mood. His head was full of designs for tragedies, epics, novels, romances, tales—among the rest, "My Oriental poem of The Destruction of the Dom Daniel." He has a "Helicon kind of dropsy" upon him; he had rather leave off eating than poetising. He was also engaged in making the promised book of travel for Cottle; in what leisure time remained after these employments he scribbled for *The Monthly Magazine*, and to good purpose, for in eight months he had earned no less than "seven pounds and two pair of breeches," which, as he observes to his brother Tom, "is not amiss." He was resolved to be happy, and he was happy. Now, too, the foolish estrangement on Coleridge's part was brought to an end. Southey had been making some acquaintance with German literature at second hand. He had read Taylor's rendering of Bürger's *Lenore*, and wondered who this William Taylor was; he had read Schiller's *Cabal and Love* in a wretched translation, finding the fifth act dreadfully affecting; he had also read Schiller's *Fiesco*. Coleridge was just back after a visit to Birmingham, but still held off from his brother-in-law and former friend. A sentence from Schiller, copied on a slip of paper by Southey, with a word or two of conciliation, was sent to the offended Abdiel of Pantisocracy: "Fiesco! Fiesco! thou leavest a void in my bosom, which the human race, thrice told, will never fill up." It did not take much to melt the faint resentment

* I find in a Catalogue of English Poetry, 1862, the following passage from an autograph letter of S. T. Coleridge, dated Bristol, July 16, 1814, then in Mr. Pickering's possession: "I looked over the first five books of the first (quarto) edition of *Joan of Arc* yesterday, at Hood's request, in order to mark the lines written by me. I was really astonished—1, at the schoolboy, wretched allegoric machinery; 2, at the transmogrification of the fanatic Virago into a modern Novel-pawing proselyte of the Age of Reason, Tom Paine in petticoats, but so lovely! and in love more dear! '*On her rubied cheek hung pity's crystal gem*;' 3, at the utter want of all rhythm in the verse, the monotony and the dead plumb down of the pauses, and of the absence of all bone, muscle, and sinew in the single lines."

of Coleridge, and to open his liberal heart. An interview followed, and in an hour's time, as the story is told by Coleridge's nephew, "these two extraordinary youths were arm in arm again."

Seven pounds and two pair of breeches are not amiss, but pounds take to themselves wings, and fly away: a poet's wealth is commonly in the *paulo-post-futurum* tense; it therefore behoved Southey to proceed with his intended study of the law. By Christmas he would receive the first instalment of an annual allowance of 160*l.* promised by his generous friend Wynn upon coming of age; but Southey, who had just written his *Hymn to the Penates* —a poem of grave tenderness and sober beauty—knew that those deities are exact in their demand for the dues of fire and salt, for the firstlings of fruits, and for offerings of fine flour. A hundred and sixty pounds would not appease them. To London, therefore, he must go, and Blackstone must become his counsellor. But never did Sindbad suffer from the tyrannous old man between his shoulders as Robert Southey suffered from Blackstone. London in itself meant deprivation of all that he most cared for; he loved to shape his life in large and simple lines, and London seemed to scribble over his consciousness with distractions and intricacies. "My spirits always sink when I approach it. Green fields are my delight. I am not only better in health, but even in heart, in the country." Some of his father's love of rural sights and sounds was in him, though hare-hunting was not an amusement of Southey the younger; he was as little of a sportsman as his friend Sir Thomas More: the only murderous sport, indeed, which Southey ever engaged in was that of pistol-shooting, with sand for ammunition, at the wasps in Bedford's garden, when he needed a diversion from the wars of Talbot and the "missioned Maid." Two pleasures of a rare kind London offered—the presence for old friends, and the pursuit of old books upon the stalls. But not even for these best lures proposed by the Demon of the place would Southey renounce

> "The genial influences
> And thoughts and feelings to be found where
> We breathe beneath the open sky, and see
> Earth's liberal bosom."

To London, however, he would go, and would read nine hours a day at law. Although he pleaded at times against his intended profession, Southey really made a strenuous effort to overcome his repugnance to legal studies, and for a while Blackstone and *Madoc* seemed to advance side by side. But the bent of his nature was strong. "I commit wilful murder on my own intellect," he writes, two years later, "by drudging at law." And the worst or the best of it was that all his drudgery was useless. Southey's memory was of that serviceable, sieve-like kind which retains everything needful to its possessor, and drops everything which is mere incumbrance. Every circumstance in the remotest degree connected with the seminary of magicians in the Dom Daniel under

the roots of the sea adhered to his memory, but how to proceed in the Court of Common Pleas was always just forgotten since yesterday. "I am not indolent; I loathe indolence; but, indeed, reading law is laborious indolence—it is thrashing straw. . . . I have given all possible attention, and attempted to command volition; . . . close the book and all was gone." In 1801 there was a chance of Southey's visiting Sicily as secretary to some Italian Legation. "It is unfortunate," he writes to Bedford, "that you cannot come to the sacrifice of one law-book—my whole proper stock—whom I design to take up to the top of Mount Etna, for the express purpose of throwing him straight to the devil. Huzza, Grosvenor! I was once afraid that I should have a deadly deal of law to forget whenever I had done with it; but my brains, God bless them, never received any, and I am as ignorant as heart could wish. The tares would not grow."

As spring advanced, impatience quickened within him; the craving for a lonely place in sight of something green became too strong. Why might not law be read in Hampshire under blue skies, and also poetry be written? Southey longed to fill his eyesight with the sea, and with sunsets over the sea; he longed to renew that delicious shock of plunging in salt waves which he had last enjoyed in the Atlantic at the foot of the glorious Arrabida mountain. Lodgings were found at Burton, near Christ Church (1797); and here took place a little Southey family-gathering, for his mother joined them, and his brother Tom, the midshipman, just released from a French prison. Here, too, came Cottle, and there were talks about the new volume of shorter poems. Here came Lloyd, the friend of Coleridge, himself a writer of verse; and with Lloyd came Lamb, the play of whose letters show that he found in Southey not only a fellow-lover of quaint books, but also a ready smiler at quips and cranks and twinklings of sly absurdity. And here he found John Rickman, "the sturdiest of jovial companions," whose clear head and stout heart were at Southey's service whenever they were needed through all the future years.

When the holiday at Burton was at an end Southey had for a time no fixed abode. He is now to be seen roaming over the cliffs by the Avon, and now casting a glance across some bookstall near Gray's Inn. In these and subsequent visits to London he was wistful for home, and eager to hasten back. "At last, my dear Edith, I sit down to write to you in quiet and something like comfort. . . . My morning has been spent pleasantly, for it has been spent alone in the library; the hours so employed pass rapidly enough, but I grow more and more homesick, like a spoilt child. On the 29th you may expect me. Term opens on the 26th. After eating my third dinner, I can drive to the mail, and thirteen shillings will be well bestowed in bringing me home four-and-twenty hours earlier: it is not above sixpence an hour, Edith, and I would gladly purchase an hour at home now at a much higher price."

A visit to Norwich (1798) was pleasant and useful, as widening the circle of his literary friends. Here Southey obtained an intro-

duction to William Taylor, whose translations from the German had previously attracted his notice. Norwich, at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present, was a little Academe among provincial cities, where the *belles-lettres* and mutual admiration were assiduously cultivated. Southey saw Norwich at its best. Among its "superior people" were several who really deserved something better than that vague distinction. Chief among them was Dr. Sayers, whom the German critics compared to Gray, who had handled the Norse mythology in poetry, who created the English monodrame, and introduced the rhymeless measures followed by Southey. He rested too soon upon his well-earned reputation, contented himself with touching and retouching his verses; and possessing singularly pleasing manners, abounding information and genial wit, embellished and enjoyed society.* William Taylor, the biographer of Sayers, was a few years his junior. He was versed in Goethe, in Schiller, in the great Kotzebue—Shakspeare's immediate successor, in Klopstock, in the fantastic ballad, in the new criticism, and all this at a time when German characters were as undecipherable to most Englishmen as Assyrian arrow-heads. The whirligig of time brought an odd revenge when Carlyle, thirty years later, hailed in Taylor the first example of "the natural-born English Philistine." In Norwich he was known as a model of filial virtue, a rising light of that illuminated city, a man whose extraordinary range pointed him out as the fit and proper person to be interrogated by any blue-stocking lady upon topics as remote as the domestic arrangements of the Chinese Emperor, Chim-Cham-Chow. William Taylor had a command of new and mysterious words: he shone in paradox, and would make ladies aghast by "defences of suicide, avowals that snuff alone had rescued him from it; information, given as certain, that 'God save the King' was sung by Jeremiah in the Temple of Solomon;" † with other blasphemies borrowed from the German, and too startling even for rationalistic Norwich. Dr. Enfield, from whose *Speaker* our fathers learnt to recite "My name is Norval," was no longer living; he had just departed in the odour of dilettantism. But solemn Dr. Alderson was here, and was now engaged in giving away his daughter Amelia to a divorced bridegroom, the painter Opie. Just now Elizabeth Gurney was listening in the Friends' Meeting-House to that discourse which transformed her from a gay haunter of country ball-rooms to the sister and servant of Newgate prisoners. The Martineaus also were of Norwich, and upon subsequent visits the author of *Thalaba* and *Kehama* was scrutinized by the keen eyes of a little girl—not born at the date of his first visit—who smiled somewhat too early and somewhat too maliciously at the airs and affectations of her native town, and whose pleasure in pricking a wind-bag, literary, political, or religious, was only over-exquisite. But Harriet Martineau, who honoured courage, purity, faithfulness, and

* See Southey's article on "Dr. Sayers's Works," *Quarterly Review*, January, 1827.
† Harriet Martineau: Autobiography, i. p. 300.

strength wherever they were found, reverenced the Tory Churchman, Robert Southey.*

Soon after his return from Norwich, a small house was taken at Westbury (1797), a village two miles distant from Bristol. During twelve happy months this continued to be Southey's home. "I never before or since," he says in one of the prefaces to his collected poems, "produced so much poetry in the same space of time." William Taylor, by talks about Voss and the German idylls, has set Southey thinking of a series of English Eclogues; Taylor also expressed his wonder that some one of our poets had not undertaken what the French and Germans so long supported —an Almanack of the Muses, or Annual Anthology of minor poems by various writers. The suggestion was well received by Southey, who became editor of such annual volumes for the years 1799 and 1800. At this period were produced many of the ballads and short pieces which are perhaps more generally known than any other of Southey's writings. He had served his apprenticeship to the craft and mystery of such verse-making in the *Morning Post*, earning thereby a guinea a week, but it was not until *Bishop Bruno* was written at Westbury that he had the luck to hit off the right tone, as he conceived it, of the modern ballad. The popularity of his *Mary the Maid of the Inn*, which unhappy children got by heart, and which some one even dramatised, was an affliction to its author, for he would rather have been remembered as a ballad writer in connexion with *Rudiger* and *Lord William*. What he has written in this kind certainly does not move the heart as with a trumpet: it does not bring with it the dim burden of sorrow which is laid upon the spirit by songs like those of Yarrow crooning of "old, unhappy. far off things." But to tell a tale of fantasy briefly, clearly, brightly, and at the same time with a certain heightening of imaginative touches, is no common achievement. The spectre of the murdered boy in *Lord William* shone upon by a sudden moonbeam, and surrounded by the welter of waves, is more than a picturesque apparition; readers of goodwill may find him a very genuine little ghost, a stern and sad justicer. What has been named "the lyrical cry" is hard to find in any of Southey's shorter poems. In *Roderick* and elsewhere he takes delight in representing great moments of life when fates are decided; but such moments are usually represented as eminences on which will and passion wrestle in a mortal embrace, and if the cry of passion be heard, it is often a half-stifled death cry. The best of Southey's shorter poems, expressing personal feelings, are those which sum up the virtue spread over seasons of life and long habitual moods. Sometimes he is simply sportive, as a serious man released from thought and toil may be, and at such times the sportiveness, while genuine as a schoolboy's, is, like a schoolboy's, the reverse of keen-edged; on other occasions he expresses simply a strong man's endurance of sorrow; but more often an undertone of gravity ap-

* See her "History of the Peace," B. vi. chap. xvi.

pears through his glee, and in his sorrow there is something of solemn joy.

All this year (1799) *Madoc* was steadily advancing, and *The Destruction of the Dom Daniel* had been already sketched in outline. Southey was fortunate in finding an admirable listener. The Pneumatic Institution, established in Bristol by Dr. Beddoes, was now under the care of a youth lately an apothecary's apprentice at Penzance, a poet, but still more a philosopher, "a miraculous young man." "He is not yet twenty-one, nor has he applied to chemistry more than eighteen months, but he has advanced with such seven-leagued strides as to overtake everybody. His name is Davy"—Humphry Davy—"the young chemist, the young everything, the man least ostentatious, of first talent that I have ever known." Southey would walk across from Westbury, an easy walk over beautiful ground, to breathe Davy's wonder-working gas, "which excites all possible mental and muscular energy, and induces almost a delirium of pleasurable sensations without any subsequent dejection." Pleased to find scientific proof that he possessed a poet's fine susceptibility, he records that the nitrous oxide wrought upon him more readily than upon any other of its votaries. "Oh, Tom!" he exclaims, gasping and ebullient—"oh, Tom! such a gas has Davy discovered, the gaseous oxyde! . . . Davy has actually invented a new pleasure for which language has no name. I am going for more this evening; it makes one strong, and so happy! so gloriously happy! . . . Oh, excellent air-bag!" If Southey drew inspiration from Davy's air-bag, could Davy do less than lend his ear to Southey's epic? They would stroll back to Martin Hall—so christened because the birds who love delicate air built under its eaves their "pendant beds"—and in the large sitting-room, its recesses stored with books, or seated near the currant-bushes in the garden, the tenant of Martin Hall would read aloud of Urien and Madoc and Cadwallon. When Davy had said good-bye, Southey would sit long in the window open to the west, poring on the fading glories of sunset, while about him the dew was cool, and the swallows' tiny shrieks of glee grew less frequent, until all was hushed and another day was done. And sometimes he would muse how all things that he needed for utter happiness were here—all things—and then would rise an ardent desire—except a child.

Martin Hall was unhappily held on no long lease; its owner now required possession, and the Southeys, with their household gods, had reluctantly to bid it farewell. Another trouble, and a more formidable one, at the same time threatened. What with Annual Anthologies, Madoc in Wales, Madoc in Aztlan, the design for a great poem on the Deluge, for a Greek drama, for a Portuguese tragedy, for a martyrdom play of the reign of Queen Mary—what with reading Spanish, learning Dutch, translating and reviewing for the booksellers—Southey had been too closely at work. His heart began to take fits of sudden and violent pulsation; his sleep, ordinarily as sound as a child's, became broken and unrefreshing.

Unless the disease were thrown off by regular exercise, Beddoes assured him, it would fasten upon him, and could not be overcome. Two years previously they had spent a summer at Burton, in Hampshire; why should they not go there again? In June, 1799, unaccompanied by his wife, whose health seemed also to be impaired, Southey went to seek a house. Two cottages, convertible into one, with a garden, a fish-pond, and a pigeon-house, promised a term of quiet and comfort in "Southey Palace that is to be." Possession was not to be had until Michaelmas, and part of the intervening time was very enjoyably spent in roaming among the vales and woods, the coombes and cliffs of Devon. It was in some measure a renewal of the open-air delight which had been his at the Arrabida and Cintra. "I have seen the Valley of Stones," he writes: "Imagine a narrow vale between two ridges of hills somewhat steep; the southern hill turfed; the vale which runs from east to west covered with huge stones and fragments of stones among the fern that fills it; the northern ridge completely bare, excoriated of all turf and all soil, the very bones and skeleton of the earth; rock reclining upon rock, stone piled upon stone, a huge and terrific mass. A palace of the Preadamite kings, a city of the Anakim, must have appeared so shapeless and yet so like the ruins of what had been shaped, after the waters of the flood subsided. I ascended with some toil the highest point; two large stones inclining on each other formed a rude portal on the summit: here I sat down; a little level platform about two yards long lay before me, and then the eye fell immediately upon the sea, far, very far below. I never felt the sublimity of solitude before."

But Southey could not rest. "I had rather leave off eating than poetising," he had said; and now the words seemed coming true, for he still poetised, and had almost ceased to eat. "Yesterday I finished *Madoc*, thank God! and thoroughly to my own satisfaction; but I have resolved on one great, laborious, and radical alteration. It was my design to identify Madoc with Mango Capac, the legislator of Peru: in this I have totally failed; therefore Mango Capac is to be the hero of another poem." There is something charming in the logic of Southey's "therefore:" so excellent an epic hero must not go to waste; but when, on the following morning, he rose early, it was to put on paper the first hundred lines, not of Mango Capac, but of the Dom Daniel poem which we know as *Thalaba*. A *Mohammed*, to be written in hexameters, was also on the stocks; and Coleridge had promised the half of this. Southey, who remembered a certain quarto volume on Pantisocracy and other great unwritten works, including the last—a Life of Lessing, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge—knew the worth of his collaborateur's promises. However, it matters little; "the only inconvenience that his dereliction can occasion will be that I shall write the poem in fragments, and have to seam them together at last." "My Mohammed will be what I believe the Arabian was in the beginning of his career—sincere in enthusiasm; and it would puz-

zle a causist to distinguish between the belief of inspiration and actual enthusiasm." A short fragment of the *Mohammed* was actually written by Coleridge, and a short fragment by Southey, which, dating from 1799, have an interest in connexion with the history of the English hexameter. Last among these many projects, Southey has made up his mind to undertake one great historical work—the History of Portugal. This was no dream-project; Mango Capac never descended from his father the Sun to appear in Southey's poem; Mohammed never emerged from the cavern where the spider had spread his net; but the work which was meant to rival Gibbon's great history was in part achieved. It is a fact more pathetic than many others which make appeal for tears, that this most ambitious and most cherished design of Southey's life, conceived at the age of twenty-six, and kept constantly in view through all his days of toil, was not yet half wrought out when, forty years later, the pen dropped from his hand, and the worn-out brain could think no more.

The deal shavings had hardly been cleared out of the twin cottages at Burton, when Southey was prostrated by a nervous fever; on recovering, he moved to Bristol, still weak, with strange pains about the heart, and sudden seizures of the head. An entire change of scene was obviously desirable. The sound of the brook that ran beside his uncle's door at Cintra, the scent of the lemon-groves, the grandeur of the Arrabida, haunted his memory; there were books and manuscripts to be found in Portugal which were essential in the preparation of his great history of that country. Mr. Hill invited him; his good friend Elmsley, an old schoolfellow, offered him a hundred pounds. From every point of view it seemed right and prudent to go. Ailing and unsettled as he was, he yet found strength and time to put his hand to a good work before leaving Bristol. Chatterton always interested Southey deeply; they had this much at least in common, that both had often listened to the chimes of St. Mary Redcliffe, that both were lovers of antiquity, both were rich in store of verse, and lacked all other riches. Chatterton's sister, Mrs. Newton, and child were needy and neglected. It occurred to Southey and Cottle that an edition of her brother's poems might be published for her benefit. Subscribers came in slowly, and the plan underwent some alterations; but in the end the charitable thought bore fruit, and the sister and niece of the great unhappy boy were lifted into security and comfort. To have done something to appease the moody and indignant spirit of a dead poet, was well; to have rescued from want a poor woman and her daughter, was perhaps even better.

Early in April, 1800, Southey was once more on his way from Bristol, by Falmouth, to the Continent, accompanied by his wife, now about to be welcomed to Portugal by the fatherly uncle whose prudence she had once alarmed. The wind was adverse, and while the travellers were detained Southey strolled along the beach, caught soldier-crabs, and observed those sea-anemones which blossom anew in the verse of Thalaba. For reading on the voyage, he

had brought Burns, Coleridge's poems, the Lyrical Ballads, and a poem, with "miraculous beauties," called *Gebir*, "written by God knows who." But when the ship lost sight of England, Southey, with swimming head, had little spirit left for wrestling with the intractable thews of Landor's early verse; he could juts grunt out some crooked pun or quaint phrase in answer to inquiries as to how he did. Suddenly, on the fourth morning, came the announcement that a French cutter was bearing down upon them. Southey leaped to his feet, hurriedly removed his wife to a place of safety, and, musket in hand, took his post upon the quarter-deck. The smoke from the enemy's matches could be seen. She was hailed, answered in broken English, and passed on. A moment more, and the suspense was over; she was English, manned from Guernsey. "You will easily imagine," says Southey, "that my sensations at the ending of the business were very definable—one honest, simple joy that I was in a whole skin!" Two mornings more, and the sun rose behind the Berlings; the heights of Cintra became visible, and nearer, the silver dust of the breakers, with sea-gulls sporting over them; a pilot's boat, with puffed and flapping sail, ran out; they passed thankfully our Lady of the Guide, and soon dropped anchor in the Tagus. An absence of four years had freshened every object to Southey's sense of seeing, and now he had the joy of viewing all familiar things as strange through so dear a companion's eyes.

Mr. Hill was presently on board with kindly greeting; he had hired a tiny house for them, perched well above the river, its little rooms cool with many doors and windows. Manuel the barber, brisk as Figaro, would be their factotum, and Mrs. Southey could also see a new maid—Maria Rosa. Maria by-and-by came to be looked at, in powder, straw-coloured gloves, fan, pink-ribands, muslin petticoat, green satin sleeves; she was "not one of the folk who sleep on straw mattresses;" withal she was young and clean. Mrs. Southey, who had liked little the prospect of being thrown abroad upon the world, was beginning to be reconciled to Portugal; roses and oranges and green peas in early May were pleasant things. Then the streets were an unending spectacle; now a negro going by with Christ in a glass case, to be kissed for a petty alms; now some picturesque, venerable beggar; now the little Emperor of the Holy Ghost, strutting it from Easter till Whitsuntide, a six-year-old mannikin with silk stockings, buckles, cocked hat, and sword, his gentlemen ushers attending, and his servants receiving donations on silver salvers. News of an assassination, from time to time, did not much disturb the tranquil tenor of ordinary life. There were old gardens to loiter in along vine-trellised walks, or in sunshine where the grey lizards glanced and gleamed. And eastward from the city were lovely by-lanes amid blossoming olive-trees or market-gardens, veined by tiny aqueducts and musical with the creak of water-wheels, which told of cool refreshment. There was also the vast public aqueduct to visit; Edith Southey, holding her husband's hand, looked down, hardly

discovering the diminished figures below of women washing in the brook of Alcantara. If the sultry noon in Lisbon was hard to endure, evening made amends; then strong sea-winds swept the narrowest alley, and rolled their current down every avenue. And later, it was pure content to look down upon the moonlighted river, with Almada stretching its black isthmus into the waters that shone like midnight snow.

Before moving to Cintra, they wished to witness the procession of the Body of God—Southey likes the English words as exposing "the naked nonsense of the blasphemy"—those of St. Anthony, and the heart of Jesus, and the first bull-fight. Everything had grown into one insufferable glare; the very dust was bleached; the light was like the quivering of a furnace fire. Every man and beast was asleep; the stone-cutter slept with his head upon the stone; the dog slept under the very cart-wheels; the bells alone slept not, nor ceased from their importunate clamour. At length—it was near mid-June—a marvellous cleaning of streets took place, the houses were hung with crimson damask, soldiers came and lined the ways, windows and balconies filled with impatient watchers—not a jewel in Lisbon but was on show. With blare of music the procession began; first, the banners of the city and its trades, the clumsy bearers crab-sidling along; an armed champion carrying a flag; wooden St. George held painfully on horseback; led horses, their saddles covered with rich escutcheons; all the brotherhoods, an immense train of men in red or grey cloaks; the knights of the orders superbly dressed; the whole patriarchal church in glorious robes; and then, amid a shower of rose-leaves fluttering from the windows, the Pix, and after the Pix, the Prince. On a broiling Sunday, the amusement being cool and devout. was celebrated the bull-feast. The first wound sickened Edith; Southey himself, not without an effort, looked on and saw "the death-sweat darkening the dun hide"—a circumstance borne in mind for his *Thalaba*. "I am not quite sure," he writes, "that my curiosity in once going was perfectly justifiable, but the pain inflicted by the sight was expiation enough."

After this it was high time to take refuge from the sun among the lemon-groves at Cintra. Here, if ever in his life, Southey for a brief season believed that the grasshopper is wiser than the ant; a true Portuguese indolence overpowered him. "I have spent my mornings half naked in a wet room dozing upon the bed, my right hand not daring to touch my left." Such glorious indolence could only be a brief possession with Southey. More often he would wander by the streams to those spots where purple crocuses carpeted the ground, and there rest and read. Sometimes seated sideways on one of the surefooted *burros*, with a boy to beat and guide the brute, he would jog lazily on, while Edith, now skilled in "ass-womanship," would jog along on a brother donkey. Once and again a fog—not unwelcome—came rolling in from the ocean, one huge mass of mist, marching through the valley like a victorious army, approaching, blotting the brightness, but leaving all

dank and fresh. And always the evenings were delightful, when fireflies sparkled under the trees, or in July and August, as their light went out, when the grillo began his song. "I eat oranges, figs, and delicious pears—drink Colares wine, a sort of half-way excellence between port and claret—read all I can lay my hands on—dream of poem after poem, and play after play—take a siesta of two hours, and am as happy as if life were but one everlasting to-day, and that to-morrow was not to be provided for."

But Southey's second visit to Portugal was, on the whole, no season of repose. A week in the southern climate seemed to have restored him to health, and he assailed folio after folio in his uncle's library, rising each morning at five, "to lay in bricks for the great Pyramid of my history." The chronicles, the laws, the poetry of Portugal, were among these bricks. Nor did he slacken in his ardour as a writer of verse. Six books of *Thalaba* were in his trunk in manuscript when he sailed from Falmouth; the remaining six were of a southern birth. "I am busy," he says, "in correcting *Thalaba* for the press. . . . It is a good job done, and so I have thought of another, and another, and another." As with *Joan of Arc*, so with this maturer poem the correction was a rehandling which doubled the writer's work. To draw the pen across six hundred lines did not cost him a pang. At length the manuscript was despatched to his friend Rickman, with instructions to make as good a bargain as he could for the first thousand copies. By *Joan* and the miscellaneous *Poems* of 1797, Southey had gained not far from a hundred and fifty pounds: he might fairly expect a hundred guineas for *Thalaba*. It would buy the furniture of his long-expected house. But he was concerned about the prospects of Harry, his younger brother; and now William Taylor wrote that some provincial surgeon of eminence would board and instruct the lad during four or five years for precisely a hundred guineas. "A hundred guineas!" Southey exclaims; "well, but, thank God, there is *Thalaba* ready, for which I ask this sum." "*Thalaba* finished, all my poetry," he writes, "instead of being wasted in rivulets and ditches, shall flow into the great Madoc Mississippi river." One epic poem, however, he finds too little to content him; already *The Curse of Kehama* is in his head, and another of the mythological series which never saw the light. "I have some distant view of manufacturing a Hindoo romance, wild as *Thalaba;* and a nearer one of a Persian story, of which I see the germ of vitality. I take the system of the Zendavesta for my mythology, and introduce the powers of darkness persecuting a Persian, one of the hundred and fifty sons of the great king; an Athenian captive is a prominent character, and the whole warfare of the evil power ends in exalting a Persian prince into a citizen of Athens." From which catastrophe we may infer that Southey had still something republican about his heart.

Before quitting Portugal, the Southeys, with their friend Waterhouse and a party of ladies, travelled northwards, encountering very gallantly the trials of the way; Mafra, its convent and library,

had been already visited by Southey. "Do you love reading?" asked the friar who accompanied them, overhearing some remark about the books. "Yes." "And I," said the honest Franciscan, "love eating and drinking." At Coimbra—that central point from which radiates the history and literature of Portugal—Southey would have agreed feelingly with the good brother of the Mafra convent; he had looked forward to precious moments of emotion in that venerable city; but air and exercise had given him a cruel appetite; if truth must be told, the ducks of the monastic poultry-yard were more to him than the precious finger of St. Anthony. "I *did* long," he confesses, "to buy, beg, or steal a dinner." The dinner must somehow have been secured before he could approach in a worthy spirit that most affecting monument at Coimbra—the Fountain of Tears. "It is the spot where Inez de Castro was accustomed to meet her husband Pedro, and weep for him in his absence. Certainly her dwelling-house was in the adjoining garden; and from there she was dragged, to be murdered at the feet of the king, her father-in-law. . . . I, who have long planned a tragedy upon the subject, stood upon my own scene." While Southey and his companions gazed at the fountains and their shadowing cedar-trees, the gownsmen gathered round; the visitors were travel-stained and bronzed by the sun; perhaps the witty youths cheered for the lady with the squaw tint; whatever offence may have been given, the ladies' protectors found them "impudent blackguards," and with difficulty suppressed pugilistic risings.

After an excursion southwards to Algarve, Southey made ready for his return to England (1801). His wife desired it, and he had attained the main objects of his sojourn abroad. His health had never been more perfect; he had read widely; he had gathered large material for his History; he knew where to put his hand on this or that which might prove needful, whenever he should return to complete his work among the libraries of Portugal. On arriving at Bristol, a letter from Coleridge met him. It was dated from Greta Hall, Keswick; and after reminding Southey that Bristol had recently lost the miraculous young man, Davy, and adding that he, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, had experiences, sufferings, hopes, projects to impart, which would beguile much time, "were you on a desert island and I your *Friday*," it went on to present the attractions of Keswick, and in particular of Greta Hall, in a way which could not be resisted. Taking all in all—the beauty of the prospect, the roominess of the house, the lowness of the rent, the unparalleled merits of the landlord, the neighbourhood of noble libraries—it united advantages not to be found together elsewhere. "In short"—the appeal wound up—"for situation and convenience—and when I mention the name of Wordsworth, for society of men of intellect—I know no place in which you and Edith would find yourselves so well suited."

Meanwhile Drummond, an M.P. and a translator of Persius, who was going as ambassador, first to Palermo and then to Constantinople, was on the look-out for a secretary. The post would

be obtained for Southey by his friend Wynn, if possible; this might lead to a consulship; why not to the consulship at Lisbon, with 1000*l.* a year? Such possibilities, however, could not prevent him from speedily visiting Coleridge and Keswick. "Time and absence make strange work with our affections," so writes Southey; "but mine are ever returning to rest upon you. I have other and dear friends, but none with whom the whole of my being is intimate. . . . Oh! I have yet such dreams. Is it quite clear that you and I were not meant for some better star, and dropped by mistake into this world of pounds, shillings, and pence?" So for the first time Southey set foot in Keswick, and looked upon the lake and the hills which were to become a portion of his being, and which have taken him so closely, so tenderly, to themselves. His first feeling was one not precisely of disappointment, but certainly of remoteness from this northern landscape; he had not yet come out from the glow and the noble *abandon* of the South. "These lakes," he says, "are like rivers; but oh for the Mondego and the Tagus! And these mountains, beautifully indeed are they shaped and grouped; but oh for the grand Monchique! and for Cintra, my paradise!"

Time alone was needed to calm and temper his sense of seeing; for when, leaving Mrs. Southey with her sister and Coleridge, he visited his friend Wynn at Llangedwin, and breathed the mountain air of his own Prince Madoc, all the loveliness of Welsh streams and rivers sank into his soul. "The Dee is broad and shallow, and its dark waters shiver into white and silver and hues of amber brown. No mud upon the shore—no bushes—no marsh plants—anywhere a child might stand dry-footed and dip his hand into the water." And again a contrasted picture: "The mountain-side was stony, and a few trees grew among its stones; the other side was more wooded, and had grass on the top, and a huge waterfall thundered into the bottom, and thundered down the bottom. When it had nearly passed these rocky straits, it met another stream. The width of water then became considerable, and twice it formed a large black pool, to the eye absolutely stagnant, the froth of the waters that entered there sleeping upon the surface; it had the deadness of enchantment; yet was not the pool wider than the river above it and below it, where it foamed over and fell." Such free delight as Southey had among the hills of Wales came quickly to an end. A letter was received offering him the position of private secretary to Mr. Corry, Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland, with a salary of four hundred pounds a year. Rickman was in Dublin, and this was Rickman's doing. Southey, as he was in prudence bound to do, accepted the appointment, hastened back to Keswick, bade farewell for a little while to his wife, and started for Dublin in no cheerful frame of mind.

At a later time, Southey possessed Irish friends whom he honoured and loved; he has written wise and humane words about the Irish people. But all through his career Ireland was to Southey somewhat too much that ideal country—of late to be found

only in the region of humorous-pathetic melodrama—in which the business of life is carried on mainly by the agency of bulls and blunderbusses; and it required a distinct effort on his part to conceive the average Teague or Patrick otherwise than as a potato-devouring troglodyte, on occasions grotesquely amiable, but more often with the rage of Popery working in his misproportioned features. Those hours during which Southey waited for the packet were among the heaviest of his existence. After weary tackings in a baffling wind, the ship was caught into a gale, and was whirled away, fifteen miles north of Dublin, to the fishing-town of Balbriggan. Then, a drive across desolate country, which would have depressed the spirits had it not been enlivened by the airs and humours of little Dr. Solomon, the unique, the omniscient, the garrulous, next after Bonaparte the most illustrious of mortals, inventor of the Cordial Balm of Gilead, and possessor of a hundred puncheons of rum. When the new private secretary arrived, the chancellor was absent; the secretary, therefore, set to work on rebuilding a portion of his *Madoc*. Presently Mr. Corry appeared, and there was a bow and a shake of hands; then he hurried away to London, to be followed by Southey, who, going round by Keswick, was there joined by his wife. From London Southey writes to Rickman, "The chancellor and the scribe go on in the same way. The scribe hath made out a catalogue of all books published since the commencement of '97 upon finance and scarcity; he hath also copied a paper written by J. R. [John Rickman] containing some Irish alderman's hints about oak-bark; and nothing more hath the scribe done in his vocation. Duly he calls at the chancellor's door; sometimes he is admitted to immediate audience; sometimes kicketh his heels in the antechamber; . . . sometimes a gracious message emancipates him for the day. Secrecy hath been enjoined him as to these State proceedings. On three subjects he is directed to read and research—corn-laws, finance, tythes, according to their written order." The independent journals meanwhile had compared Corry and Southey, the two State conspirators, to Empson and Dudley: and delicately expressed a hope that the poet would make no false *numbers* in his new work.

Southey, who had already worn an ass's head in one of Gillray's caricatures, was not afflicted by the newspaper sarcasm; but the vacuity of such a life was intolerable; and when it was proposed that he should become tutor to Corry's son, he brought his mind finally to the point of resigning "a foolish office and a good salary." His notions of competence were moderate; the vagabondage between the Irish and English headquarters entailed by his office was irksome. His books were accumulating, and there was ample work to be done among them if he had but a quiet library of his own. Then, too, there was another good reason for resigning. A new future was opening for Southey. Early in the year (1802) his mother died. She had come to London to be with her son; there she had been stricken with mortal illness; true to her happy, self-forgetful instincts, she remained calm, uncomplain-

ing. considerate for others. "Go down, my dear; I shall sleep presently," she had said, knowing that death was at hand. With his mother, the last friend of Southey's infancy and childhood was gone. "I calmed and curbed myself," he writes, "and forced myself to employment; but at night there was no sound of feet in her bedroom, to which I had been used to listen, and in the morning it was not my first business to see her." The past was past indeed. But as the year opened, it brought a happy promise; before summer would end, a child might be in his arms. Here were sufficient reasons for his resignation; a library and a nursery ought, he says, to be stationary.

To Bristol husband and wife came, and there found a small furnished house. After the roar of Fleet Street, and the gathering of distinguished men—Fuseli, Flaxman, Barry, Lamb, Campbell, Bowles—there was a strangeness in the great quiet of the place. But in that quiet Southey could observe each day the growth of the pile of manuscript containing his version of *Amadis of Gaul*, for which Longman and Rees promised him a munificent sixty pounds. He toiled at his *History of Portugal*, finding matter of special interest in that part which was concerned with the religious orders. He received from his Lisbon collection precious boxes folio-crammed. "My dear and noble books! Such folios of saints! dull books enough for my patience to diet upon, till all my flock be gathered together into one fold." Sixteen volumes of Spanish poetry are lying uncut in the next room; a folio yet untasted jogs his elbow; two of the best and rarest chronicles coyly invite him. He had books enough in England to employ three years of active industry. And underlying all thoughts of the great Constable Nuño Alvares Pereyra, of the King D. Joao I., and of the Cid, deeper than the sportsman pleasure of hunting from their lair strange facts about the orders Cistercian, Franciscan, Dominican, Jesuit, there was a thought of that new-comer whom, says Southey, "I already feel disposed to call whelp and dog, and all those vocables of vituperation by which a man loves to call those he loves best."

In September, 1802, was born Southey's first child, named Margaret Edith, after her mother and her dead grandmother: a flat-nosed, round-foreheaded, grey-eyed, good-humoured girl "I call Margaret," he says, in a sober mood of fatherly happiness, "by way of avoiding all commonplace phraseology of endearment, a worthy child and a most excellent character She loves me better than any one except her mother; her eyes are as quick as thought; she is all life and spirit, and as happy as the day is long; but that little brain of hers is never at rest, and it is painful to see how dreams disturb her." For Margery and her mother and the folios a habitation must be found. Southey inclined now towards settling in the neighbourhood of London—now towards Norwich, where Dr Sayers and William Taylor would welcome him—now towards Keswick; but its horrid latitude, its incessant rains! On the whole, his heart turned most fondly to Wales; and there, in

one of the loveliest spots of Great Britain, in the Vale of Neath, was a house to let, by name Maes Gwyn. Southey gave his fancy the rein, and pictured himself "housed and homed" in Maes Gwyn, working steadily at the *History of Portugal*, and now and again glancing away from his work to have a look at Margery seated in her little great chair. But it was never to be; a difference with the landlord brought to an end his treaty for the house, and in August the child lay dying. It was bitter to part with what had been so long desired—during seven childless years—and what had grown so dear. But Southey's heart was strong; he drew himself together, returned to his toil, now less joyous than before, and set himself to strengthen and console his wife.

Bristol was henceforth a place of mournful memories. "Edith," writes Southey, "will be nowhere so well as with her sister Coleridge. She has a little girl some six months old, and I shall try and graft her into the wound while it is yet fresh." Thus Greta Hall received its guests (September, 1803). At first the sight of little Sarah Coleridge and her baby cooings caused shootings of pain on which Southey had not counted. Was the experiment of this removal to prove a failure? He still felt as if he were a feather driven by the wind. "I have no symptoms of root-striking here," he said. But he spoke, not knowing what was before him: the years of wandering were indeed over; here he had found his home.

CHAPTER IV.

WAYS OF LIFE AT KESWICK, 1803—1839.

THE best of life with Southey was yet to come; but in what remains there are few outstanding events to chronicle; there is nowhere any splendour of circumstance. Of some lives the virtue is distilled, as it were, into a few exquisite moments—moments of rapture, of vision, of sudden and shining achievement; all the days and years seem to exist only for the sake of such faultless moments, and it matters little whether such a life, of whose very essence it is to break the bounds of time and space, be long or short as measured by the falling of sandgrains or the creeping of a shadow. Southey's life was not one of these; its excellence was constant, uniform, perhaps somewhat too evenly distributed. He wrought in his place day after day, season after season. He submitted to the good laws of use and wont. He grew stronger, calmer, more full-fraught with stores of knowledge, richer in treasure of the heart. Time laid its hand upon him gently and unfalteringly: the bounding step became less light and swift; the ringing voice lapsed into sadder fits of silence; the raven hair changed to a snowy white; only still the indefatigable eye ran down the long folio columns, and the indefatigable hand still held the pen—until all true life had ceased. When it has been said that Southey was appointed Pye's successor in the laureateship, that he received an honorary degree from his university, that now and again he visited the Continent, that children were born to him from among whom death made choice of the dearest; and when we add that he wrote and published books, the leading facts of Southey's life have been told. Had he been a worse or a weaker man, we might look to find mysteries, picturesque vices, or engaging follies; as it is, everything is plain, straightforward, substantial. What makes the life of Southey eminent and singular is its unity of purpose, its persistent devotion to a chosen object, its simplicity, purity, loyalty, fortitude, kindliness, truth.

The river Greta, before passing under the bridge at the end of Main Street, Keswick, winds about the little hill on which stands Greta Hall; its murmur may be heard when all is still beyond the garden and orchard; to the west it catches the evening light. "In front," Coleridge wrote when first inviting his friend to settle with him, "we have a giants' camp—an encamped army of tent-like

mountains, which by an inverted arch gives a view of another vale. On our right the lovely vale and the wedge-shaped lake of Bassenthwaite; and on our left Derwentwater and Lodore full in view, and the fantastic mountains of Borrowdale. Behind us the massy Skiddaw, smooth, green, high, with two chasms and a tent-like ridge in the larger." Southey's house belongs in a peculiar degree to his life: in it were stored the treasures upon which his intellect drew for sustenance; in it his affections found their earthly abiding-place; all the most mirthful, all the most mournful, recollections of Southey hang about it; to it in every little wandering his heart reverted like an exile's; it was at once his workshop and his play-ground; and for a time, while he endured a living death, it became his ante-chamber to the tomb. The rambling tenement consisted of two houses under one roof, the larger part being occupied by the Coleridges and Southeys, the smaller for a time by Mr. Jackson, their landlord. On the ground-floor was the parlour which served as dining-room and general sitting-room, a pleasant chamber looking upon the green in front; here also were Aunt Lovell's sitting-room, and the mangling-room, in which stood ranged in a row the long array of clogs, from the greatest even unto the least, figuring in a symbol the various stages of human life. The stairs to the right of the kitchen led to a landing-place filled with bookcases; a few steps more led to the little bedroom occupied by Mrs. Coleridge and her daughter. "A few steps farther," writes Sara Coleridge, whose description is here given in abridgment, "was a little wing bedroom—then the study, where my uncle sat all day occupied with literary labours and researches, but which was used as a drawing-room for company. Here all the visiting guests were received. The room had three windows, a large one looking down upon the green with the wide flower-border, and over to Keswick Lake and mountains beyond. There were two smaller windows looking towards the lower part of the town seen beyond the nursery-garden. The room was lined with books in fine bindings; there were books also in brackets, elegantly lettered vellum-covered volumes lying on their sides in a heap. The walls were hung with pictures, mostly portraits. . . . At the back of the room was a comfortable sofa, and there were sundry tables, besides my uncle's library table, his screen, desk, etc. Altogether, with its internal fitting up, its noble outlook, and something pleasing in its proportions, this was a charming room." Hard by the study was Southey's bedroom. We need not ramble farther through passages lined with books, and up and down flights of stairs to Mr. Jackson's organ-room, and Mrs. Lovell's room, and Hartley's parlour, and the nurseries, and the dark apple-room supposed to be the abode of a bogle. Without, greensward, flowers, shrubs, strawberry-beds, fruit-trees, encircled the house; to the back, beyond the orchard, a little wood stretched down to the river-side. A rough path ran along the bottom of the wood: here, on a covered seat, Southey often read or planned future work, and here his little niece loved to play in sight of the dimpling water. "Dear Greta Hall!" she

exclaims; "and oh, that rough path beside the Greta! How much of my childhood, of my girlhood, of my youth, were spent there!"

Southey's attachment to his mountain town and its lakes was of no sudden growth. He came to them as one not born under their influence; that power of hills to which Wordsworth owed fealty, had not brooded upon Southey during boyhood; the rich southern meadows, the wooded cliffs of Avon, the breezy downs, had nurtured his imagination, and to these he was still bound by pieties of the heart. In the churchyard at Ashton, where lay his father and his kinsfolk, the beneficent cloud of mingled love and sorrow most overshadowed his spirit. His imagination did not soar, as did Wordsworth's, in naked solitudes; he did not commune with a Presence immanent in external nature: the world, as he viewed it, was an admirable habitation for mankind—a habitation with a history. Even after he had grown a mountaineer, he loved a humanised landscape, one in which the gains of man's courage, toil, and endurance are apparent. Flanders, where the spade has wrought its miracles of diligence, where the slow canal-boat glides, where the *carillons* ripple from old spires, where sturdy burghers fought for freedom, and where vellum-bound quartos might be sought and found, Flanders, on the whole, gave Southey deeper and stronger feelings than did Switzerland. The ideal land of his dreams was always Spain; the earthly paradise for him was Cintra, with its glory of sun, and a glow even in its depths of shadow. But as the years went by, Spain became more and more a memory, less and less a hope; and the realities of life in his home were of more worth every day. When, in 1807, it grew clear that Greta Hall was to be his life-long place of abode, Southey's heart closed upon it with a tenacious grasp. He set the plasterer and carpenter to work; he planted shrubs; he enclosed the garden; he gathered his books about him, and thought that here were materials for the industry of many years; he held in his arms children who were born in this new home; and he looked to Crosthwaite Churchyard, expecting, with quiet satisfaction, that when toil was ended he should there take his rest.

"I don't talk much about these things," Southey writes; "but these lakes and mountains give me a deep joy for which I suspect nothing elsewhere can compensate, and this is a feeling which time strengthens instead of weakening."—Some of the delights of southern counties he missed; his earliest and deepest recollections were connected with flowers; both flowers and fruits were now too few: there was not a cowslip to be found near Keswick. "Here in Cumberland I miss the nightingale and the violet—the most delightful bird and the sweetest flower." But for such losses there were compensations. A pastoral land will give amiable pledges for the seasons and the months, and will perform its engagements with a punctual observance; to this the mountains hardly condescend, but they shower at their will a sudden largess of unimagined beauty. Southey would sally out for a constitutional at his

three-mile pace, the peaked cap slightly shadowing his eyes, which were coursing over the pages of a book held open as he walked; he had left his study to obtain exercise, and so to preserve health; he was not a laker engaged in view-hunting; he did not affect the contemplative mood which at the time was not and could not be his. But when he raised his eyes, or when, quickening his three-mile to a four-mile pace, he closed the book, the beauty which lay around him liberated and soothed his spirit. This it did unfailingly; and it might do more, for incalculable splendours, visionary glories, exaltations, terrors, are momentarily possible where mountain, and cloud, and wind, and sunshine meet. Southey, as he says, did not talk much of these things, but they made life for him immeasurably better than it would have been in city confinement; there were spaces, vistas, and atmosphere around his sphere of work, which lightened and relieved it. The engagements in his study were always so numerous and so full of interest that it needed an effort to leave the table piled with books and papers. But a May morning would draw him forth into the sun in spite of himself. Once abroad, Southey had a vigorous joy in the quickened blood, and the muscles impatient with energy long pent up. The streams were his especial delight; he never tired of their deep retirement, their shy loveliness, and their melody; they could often beguile him into an hour of idle meditation; their beauty has in an especial degree passed into his verse. When his sailor brother Thomas came and settled in the Vale of Newlands, Southey would quickly cover the ground from Keswick at his four-mile pace, and in the beck at the bottom of Tom's fields, on summer days, he would plunge and re-plunge and act the river-god in the natural seats of mossy stone. Or he would be overpowered some autumn morning by the clamour of childish voices voting a holiday by acclamation. Their father must accompany them; it would do him good, they knew it would; they knew he did not take sufficient exercise, for they had heard him say so. Where should the scramble be? To Skiddaw Dod, or Causey Pike, or Watenlath, or, as a compromise between their exuberant activity and his inclination for the chair and the fireside, to Walla Crag? And there while his young companions open their baskets and took their noonday meal, Southey would seat himself—as Westall has drawn him—upon the bough of an ash-tree, the water flowing smooth and green at his feet, but a little higher up broken, flashing, and whitening in its fall; and there in the still autumn noon he would muse happily, placidly, not now remembering with overkeen desire the gurgling tanks and fountains of Cintra, his Paradise of early manhood.*

On summer days, when the visits of friends, or strangers bearing letters of introduction, compelled him to idleness, Southey's more ambitious excursions were taken. But he was well aware that those who form acquaintance with a mountain region during a summer all blue and gold, know little of its finer power. It is Oc-

* For Westall's drawing, and the description of Walla Crag, see "Sir Thomas More:" Colloquy VI.

tober that brings most often those days faultless, pearl-pure, of affecting influence,

> "In the long year set
> Like captain jewels in the carcanet."

Then, as Wordsworth has said, the atmosphere seems refined, and the sky rendered more crystalline, as the vivifying heat of the year abates; the lights and shadows are more delicate; the colouring is richer and more finely harmonised; and, in this season of stillness, the ear being unoccupied, or only gently excited, the sense of vision becomes more susceptible of its appropriate enjoyments. Even December is a better month than July for perceiving the special greatness of a mountainous country. When the snow lies on the fells soft and smooth, Grisedale Pike and Skiddaw drink in tints at morning and evening marvellous as those seen upon Mont Blanc or the Jungfrau for purity and richness.

"Summer," writes Southey, "is not the season for this country. Coleridge says, and says well, that then it is like a theatre at noon. There are no *goings on* under a clear sky; but at other seasons there is such shifting of shades, such islands of light, such columns and buttresses of sunshine, as might almost make a painter burn his brushes, as the sorcerers did their books of magic when they saw the divinity which rested upon the apostles. The very snow, which you would perhaps think must monotonise the mountains, gives new varieties; it brings out their recesses and designates all their inequalities: it impresses a better feeling of their height; and it reflects such tints of saffron, or fawn, or rose-colour to the evening sun. *O Maria Santissima!* Mount Horeb, with the glory upon its summit, might have been more glorious, but not more beautiful than old Skiddaw in his winter pelisse. I will not quarrel with frost, though the fellow has the impudence to take me by the nose. The lake-side has such ten thousand charms: a fleece of snow or of the hoar-frost lies on the fallen trees or large stones; the grass-points, that just peer above the water, are powdered with diamonds; the ice on the margin with chains of crystal, and such veins and wavy lines of beauty as mock all art; and, to crown all, Coleridge and I have found out that stones thrown upon the lake when frozen make a noise like singing birds, and when you whirl on it a large flake of ice, away the shivers slide, chirping and warbling like a flight of finches." This tells of a February at Keswick; the following describes the *goings on* under an autumn sky:—"The mountains on Thursday evening, before the sun was quite down, or the moon bright, were all of one dead-blue colour; their rifts and rocks and swells and scars had all disappeared—the surface was perfectly uniform, nothing but the outline distinct; and this even surface of dead blue, from its unnatural uniformity, made them, though not transparent, appear transvious—as though they were of some soft or cloudy texture through which you could have passed. I never saw any appearance so perfectly unreal. Sometimes a

blazing sunset seems to steep them through and through with relight; or it is a cloudy morning, and the sunshine slants down through a rift in the clouds, and the pillar of light makes the spot whereon it falls so emerald green, that it looks like a little field of Paradise. At night you lose the mountains, and the wind so stirs up the lake that it looks like the sea by moonlight."

If Southey had not a companion by his side, the solitude of his ramble was unbroken; he never had the knack of forgathering with chance acquaintance. With intellectual and moral boldness, and with high spirits, he united a constitutional bashfulness and reserve. His retired life, his habits of constant study, and, in later years, his shortness of sight, fell in with this infirmity. He would not patronise his humbler neighbours; he had a kind of imaginative jealousy on behalf of their rights as independent persons; and he could not be sure of straightway discovering, by any genius or instinct of good fellowship, that common ground whereon strangers are at home with one another. Hence—and Southey himself wished that it had been otherwise—long as he resided at Keswick, there were perhaps not twenty persons of the lower ranks whom he knew by sight. "After slightly returning the salutation of some passer-by," says his son, "he would again mechanically lift his cap as he heard some well-known name in reply to his inquiries, and look back with regret that the greeting had not been more cordial."

If the ice were fairly broken, he found it natural to be easy and familiar, and by those whom he employed he was regarded with affectionate reverence. Mrs. Wilson—kind and generous creature—remained in Greta Hall tending the children as they grew up, until she died, grieved for by the whole household. Joseph Glover, who created the scarecrow "Statues" for the garden—male and female created he them, as the reader may see them figured toward the close of *The Doctor*—Glover, the artist who set up Edith's fantastic chimney-piece ("Well, Miss Southey," cried honest Joseph, "I've done my Devils"), was employed by Southey during five-and-twenty years, ever since he was a 'prentice-boy. If any warm-hearted neighbour, known or unknown to him, came forward with a demand on Southey's sympathies, he was sure to meet a neighbourly response. When the miller, who had never spoken to him before, invited the laureate to rejoice with him over the pig he had killed—the finest ever fattened—and when Southey was led to the place where that which had ceased to be pig and was not yet bacon, was hung up by the hind feet, he filled up the measure of the good man's joy by hearty appreciation of a porker's points. But Cumberland enthusiasm seldom flames abroad with so prodigal a blaze as that of the worthy miller's heart.

Within the charmed circle of home, Southey's temper and manners were full of a strong and sweet hilarity; and the home circle was in itself a considerable group of persons. The Pantisocratic scheme of a community was, after all, near finding a fulfilment, only that the Greta ran by in place of the Susquehanna, and that Southey took upon his own shoulders the work of the dead Lovell, and of

Coleridge, who lay in weakness and dejection, whelmed under the tide of dreams. For some little time Coleridge continued to reside at Keswick, an admirable companion in almost all moods of mind, for all kinds of wisdom, and all kinds of nonsense. When he was driven abroad in search of health, it seemed as if a brightness were gone out of the air, and the horizon of life had grown definite and contracted. "It is now almost ten years," Southey writes, "since he and I first met in my rooms at Oxford, which meeting decided the destiny of both. . . . I am perpetually pained at thinking what he ought to be, . . . but the tidings of his death would come upon me more like a stroke of lightning than any evil I have ever yet endured."

Mrs. Coleridge, with her children, remained at Greta Hall. That quaint little metaphysician, Hartley—now answering to the name of Moses, now to that of Job, the oddest of all God's creatures—was an unceasing wonder and delight to his uncle: "a strange, strange boy, 'exquisitely wild,' an utter visionary, like the moon among thin clouds, he moves in a circle of his own making. He alone is a light of his own. Of all human beings I never saw one so utterly naked of self." When his father expressed surprise that Hartley should take his pleasure of wheel-barrow-riding so sadly, "The pity is"—explained little Job—"the pity is, *I'se* always thinking of my thoughts." "'I'm a boy of a very religious turn,' he says; for he always talks of himself and examines his own character, just as if he were speaking of another person, and as impartially. Every night he makes an extempore prayer aloud; but it is always in bed, and not till he is comfortable there and got into the mood. When he is ready, he touches Mrs. Wilson, who sleeps with him, and says, 'Now listen!' and off he sets like a preacher." Younger than Hartley was Derwent Coleridge, a fair, broad-chested boy, with merry eye and roguish lips, now grown out of that yellow frock in which he had earned his name of Stumpy Canary. Sara Coleridge, when her uncle came to Keswick after the death of his own Margery, was a little grand-lama at that worshipful age of seven months. A fall into the Greta, a year and a half later, helped to change her to the delicate creature whose large blue eyes would look up timidly from under her lace border and mufflings of muslin. No feeling towards their father save a reverent loyalty did the Coleridge children ever learn under Southey's roof. But when the pale-faced wanderer returned from Italy, he surprised and froze his daughter by a sudden revelation of that jealousy which is the fond injustice of an unsatisfied heart, and which a child who has freely given and taken love finds it hard to comprehend. "I think my dear father," writes Sara Coleridge, "was anxious that I should learn to love him and the Wordsworths and their children, and not cling so exclusively to my mother and all around me at home." Love him and revere his memory she did; to Wordsworth she was conscious of owing more than to any other teacher or inspirer in matters of the intellect and imagination. But in matters of the heart and conscience the daily life of Southey was the book in

which she read; he was, she would emphatically declare, "upon the whole, the best man she had ever known."

But the nepotism of the most "nepotious" uncle is not a perfect substitute for fatherhood with its hopes and fears. May-morning of the year 1804 saw "an Edithling very, very ugly, with no more beauty than a young dodo," nestling by Edith Southey's side. A trembling thankfulness possessed the little one's father; but when the Arctic weather changed suddenly to days of genial sunshine, and groves and gardens burst into living greenery, and rang with song, his heart was caught into the general joy. Southey was not without a presentiment that his young dodo would improve. Soon her premature activity of eye and spirits troubled him, and he tried, while cherishing her, to put a guard upon his heart. "I did not mean to trust my affections again on so frail a foundation—and yet the young one takes me from my desk and makes me talk nonsense as fluently as you perhaps can imagine." When Sara Coleridge—not yet five years old, but already, as she half believed, promised in marriage to Mr. De Quincey—returned after a short absence to Greta Hall, she saw her baby cousin, sixteen months younger, and therefore not yet marriageable, grown into a little girl very fair, with thick golden hair, and round, rosy cheeks. Edith Southey inherited something of her father's looks and of his swift intelligence; with her growing beauty of face and limbs a growing excellence of inward nature kept pace. At twenty she was the "elegant cygnet" of Amelia Opie's album verses,

> "Twas pleasant to meet
> And see thee, famed Swan of the Derwent's fair tide,
> With that elegant cygnet that floats by thy side"—

a compliment her father mischievously would not let her Elegancy forget. Those who would know her in the loveliness of youthful womanhood may turn to Wordsworth's poem, *The Triad*, where she appears first of the three "sister nymphs" of Keswick and Rydal; or, Hartley Coleridge's exquisite sonnet, *To a lofty beauty, from her poor kinsman:*

> "Methinks thy scornful mood,
> And bearing high of stately womanhood—
> Thy brow where Beauty sits to tyrannise
> O'er humble love, had made me sadly fear thee:
> For never sure was seen a royal bride,
> Whose gentleness gave grace to so much pride—
> My very thoughts would tremble to be near thee,
> But when I see thee by thy father's side
> Old times unqueen thee, and old loves endear thee."

But it is best of all to remember Southey's daughter in connection with one letter of her father's. In 1805 he visited Scotland alone; he had looked forward to carrying on the most cherished purpose of his life—the *History of Portugal*—among the libraries of Lisbon.

But it would be difficult to induce Mrs. Southey to travel with the Edithling. Could he go alone? The short absence in Scotland served to test his heart, and so to make his future clear:—

"I need not tell you, my own dear Edith, not to read my letters aloud till you have first of all seen what is written only for yourself. What I have now to say to you is, that having been eight days from home, with as little discomfort, and as little reason for discomfort, as a man can reasonably expect, I have yet felt so little comfortable, so great sense of solitariness, and so many homeward yearnings, that certainly I will not go to Lisbon without you; a resolution which, if your feelings be at all like mine, will not displease you. If, on mature consideration, you think the inconvenience of a voyage more than you ought to submit to, I must be content to stay in England, as on my part it certainly is not worth while to sacrifice a year's happiness; for though not unhappy (my mind is too active and too well disciplined to yield to any such criminal weakness), still, without you I am not happy. But for your sake as well as my own, and for little Edith's sake, I will not consent to any separation; the growth of a year's love between her and me, if it please God that she should live, is a thing too delightful in itself, and too valuable in its consequences, both to her and me, to be given up for any light inconvenience either on your part or mine. An absence of a year would make her effectually forget me. . . . But of these things we will talk at leisure; only, dear, dear Edith, we must not part."

Such wisdom of the heart was justified; the year of growing love bore precious fruit. When Edith May was ten years old her father dedicated to her, in verses laden with a father's tenderest thoughts and feelings, his *Tale of Paraguay*. He recalls the day of her birth, the preceding sorrow for his first child, whose infant features have faded from him like a passing cloud; the gladness of that singing month of May; the seasons that followed during which he observed the dawning of the divine light in her eyes; the playful guiles by which he won from her repeated kisses: to him these ten years seem like yesterday; but to her they have brought discourse of reason, with the sense of time and change:—

> "And I have seen thine eyes suffused in grief
> When I have said that with autumnal grey
> The touch of old hath mark'd thy father's head;
> That even the longest day of life is brief,
> And mine is falling fast into the yellow leaf."

Other children followed, until a happy stir of life filled the house. Emma, the quietest of infants, whose voice was seldom heard, and whose dark-grey eyes too seldom shone in her father's study, slipped quietly out of the world after a hand's-breadth of existence: but to Southey she was no more really lost than the buried brother and sister were to the cottage girl of Wordsworth's *We are seven*. "I have five children," he says in 1809; "three of them at home, and two under my mother's care in heaven." Of all the most radiantly beautiful was Isabel; the most passionately loved was

Herbert. "My other two are the most perfect contrast you ever saw. Bertha, whom I call Queen Henry the Eighth, from her likeness to King Bluebeard, grows like Jonah's gourd, and is the very picture of robust health; and little Kate hardly seems to grow at all, though perfectly well—she is round as a mushroom-button. Bertha, the bluff queen, is just as grave as Kate is garrulous; they are inseparable playfellows, and go about the house hand in hand."

Among the inmates of Greta Hall, to overlook Lord Nelson and Bona Marietta, with their numerous successors, would be a grave delinquency. To be a cat, was to be a privileged member of the little republic to which Southey gave laws. Among the fragments at the end of *The Doctor* will be found a Chronicle History of the Cattery of Cat's Eden; and some of Southey's frolic letters are written as if his whole business in life were that of secretary for feline affairs in Greta Hall. A house, he declared, is never perfectly furnished for enjoyment unless there is in it a child rising three years old and a kitten rising six weeks; "kitten is in the animal world what the rosebud is in the garden." Lord Nelson, an ugly specimen of the streaked-carroty or Judas-coloured kind, yet withal a good cat, affectionate, vigilant, and brave, was succeeded by Madame Bianchi, a beautiful and singular creature, white, with a fine tabby tail; "her wild eyes were bright, and green as the Duchess de Cadaval's emerald necklace." She fled away with her niece Pulcheria on the day when good old Mrs. Wilson died; nor could any allurements induce the pair to domesticate themselves again. For some time a cloud of doom seemed to hang over Cat's Eden. Ovid and Virgil, Othello the Moor, and Pope Joan perished miserably. At last Fortune, as if to make amends for her unkindness, sent to Greta Hall almost together the never-to-be-enough-praised Rumpelstilzchen (afterwards raised for service against rats to be His Serene Highness the Archduke Rumpelstilzchen), and the equally-to-be-praised Hurly-burlybuss. With whom too soon we must close the catalogue.

The revenue to maintain this household was in the main won by Southey's pen. "It is a difficult as well as a delicate task," he wrote in the *Quarterly Review*, "to advise a youth of ardent mind and aspiring thoughts in the choice of a profession; but a wise man will have no hesitation in exhorting him to choose anything rather than literature. Better that he should seek his fortune before the mast, or with a musket on his shoulder and a knapsack on his back; better that he should follow the plough, or work at the loom or the lathe, or sweat over the anvil, than trust to literature as the only means of his support." Southey's own bent towards literature was too strong to be altered. But, while he accepted loyally the burdens of his profession as a man of letters, he knew how stout a back is needed to bear them month after month and year after year. Absolutely dependent on his pen he was at no time. His generous friend Wynn, upon coming of age, allowed him annually 160*l*, until, in 1807, he was able to procure for

Southey a Government pension for literary services amounting, clear of taxes, to nearly the same sum. Southey had as truly as any man the pride of independence, but he had none of its vanity; there was no humiliation in accepting a service from one whom friendship had made as close as a brother. Men, he says, are as much better for the good offices which they receive as for those they bestow; and his own was no niggard hand. Knowing both to give and to take, with him the remembrance that he owed much to others was among the precious possessions of life which bind us to our kind with bonds of sonship, not of slavery. Of the many kindnesses which he received he never forgot one. "Had it not been for your aid," he writes to Wynn, forty years after their first meeting in Dean's Yard, "I should have been irretrievably wrecked when I ran upon the shoals, with all sail set, in the very outset of my voyage." And to another good old friend, who from his own modest station applauded while Southey ran forward in the race:—"Do you suppose, Cottle, that I have forgotten those true and most essential acts of friendship which you showed me when I stood most in need of them? Your house was my house when I had no other. The very money with which I bought my wedding-ring and paid my marriage-fees was supplied by you. It was with your sisters I left Edith during my six months' absence, and for the six months after my return it was from you that I received, week by week, the little on which we lived, till I was enabled to live by other means. It is not the settling of a cash account that can cancel obligations like these. You are in the habit of preserving your letters, and if you were not, I would entreat you to preserve *this*, that it might be seen hereafter. . . . My head throbs and my eyes burn with these recollections. Good-night! my dear old friend and benefactor."

Anxiety about his worldly fortunes never cost Southey a sleepless night. His disposition was always hopeful; relying on Providence, he says, I could rely upon myself. When he had little, he lived upon little, never spending when it was necessary to spare; and his means grew with his expenses. Business habits he had none; never in his life did he cast up an account; but in a general way he knew that money comes by honest toil and grows by diligent husbandry. Upon Mrs. Southey, who had an eye to all the household outgoings, the cares of this life fell more heavily. Sara Coleridge calls to mind her aunt as she moved about Greta Hall intent on house affairs, "with her fine figure and quietly commanding air." Alas! under this gracious dignity of manner the wear and tear of life were doing their work surely. Still, it was honest wear and tear. "I never knew her to do an unkind act," says Southey, "nor say an unkind word;" but when stroke followed upon stroke of sorrow, they found her without that elastic temper which rises and recovers itself. Until the saddest of afflictions made her helpless, everything was left to her management, and was managed so quietly and well, that except in times of sickness and bereavement, "I had," writes her husband, "literally no cares."

Thus free from harass, Southey toiled in his library; he toiled not for bread alone, but also for freedom. There were great designs before him which, he was well aware, if ever realised, would make but a poor return to the household coffer. To gain time and a vantage-ground for these, he was content to yield much of his strength to work of temporary value, always contriving, however, to strike a mean in this journeyman service between what was most and least akin to his proper pursuits. When a parcel of books arrived from the *Annual Review*, he groaned in spirit over the sacrifice of time; but patience! it is, after all, better, he would reflect, than pleading in a court of law; better than being called up at midnight to a patient; better than calculating profit and loss at a counter; better, in short, than anything but independence. "I am a quiet, patient, easy-going hack of the mule breed"—he writes to Grosvenor Bedford—"regular as clock-work in my pace, sure-footed, bearing the burden which is laid on me, and only obstinate in choosing my own path. If Gifford could see me by this fireside, where, like Nicodemus, one candle suffices me in a large room, he would see a man in a coat 'still more threadbare than his own,' when he wrote his 'Imitation,' working hard and getting little—a bare maintenance, and hardly that; writing poems and history for posterity with his whole heart and soul: one daily progressive in learning, not so learned as he is poor, not so poor as proud, not so proud as happy. Grosvenor, there is not a lighter-hearted nor a happier man upon the face of this wide world." When these words were written, Herbert stood by his father's side; it was sweet to work that his boy might have his play-time glad and free.

The public estimate of Southey's works as expressed in pounds, shillings, and pence, was lowest where he held that it ought to have been highest. For the *History of Brazil*, a work of stupendous toil, which no one in England could have produced save Southey himself, he had not received, after eight years, as much as for a single article in the *Quarterly Review*. *Madoc*, the pillar, as he supposed, on which his poetical fame was to rest; *Madoc*, which he dismissed with an awed feeling, as if in it he were parting with a great fragment of his life, brought its author, after twelve months' sales, the sum of 3*l.* 17*s.* 1*d.* On the other hand, for his *Naval Biography* which interested him less than most of his works, and which was undertaken after hesitation, he was promised five hundred guineas a volume. Notwithstanding his unwearied exertions, his modest scale of expenditure, and his profitable connexion with the *Quarterly Review*—for an important article he would receive 100*l.*—he never had a year's income in advance until that year, late in his life, in which Sir Robert Peel offered him a baronetcy. In 1818, the lucky payment of a bad debt enabled him to buy 300*l.* in the Three-per-cents. "I have 100*l.* already there," he writes, "and shall then be worth 12*l.* per annum." By 1821 this sum had grown to 625*l.*, the gatherings of half a life-time. In that year his friend John May, whose acquaintance he had made in Portugal, and to whose kindness he was a debtor, suffered the loss of his

fortune. As soon as Southey had heard the state of affairs, his decision was formed. "By this post," he tells his friend, "I write to Bedford, desiring that he will transfer to you 625*l.* in the Three-per-cents. I wish it was more, and that I had more at my command in any way. I shall in the spring, if I am paid for the first volume of my History as soon as it is finished. One hundred I should, at all events, have sent you then. It shall be as much more as I receive." And he goes on in cheery words to invite John May to break away from business and come to Keswick, there to lay in "a pleasant store of recollections which in all moods of mind are wholesome." One rejoices that Southey, poor of worldly goods, knew the happiness of being so simply and nobly generous.

Blue and white China, mediæval ivories, engravings by the Little Masters, Chippendale cabinets, did not excite pining desire in Southey's breast; yet in one direction he indulged the passion of a collector. If, with respect to any of "the things independent of the will," he showed a want of moderation unworthy of his discipleship to Epictetus, it was assuredly with respect to books. Before he possessed a fixed home, he was already moored to his folios; and when once he was fairly settled at Keswick, many a time the carriers on the London road found their lading the larger by a weighty packet on its way to Greta Hall. Never did he run north or south for a holiday, but the inevitable parcel preceded or followed his return. Never did he cross to the Continent but a bulkier bale arrived in its own good time, enclosing precious things. His morality, in all else void of offence, here yielded to the seducer. It is thought that Southey was in the main honest; but if Dirk Hatteraick had run ashore a hundred-weight of the Acta Sanctorum duty-free, the king's laureate was not the man to set the sharks upon him; and it is to be feared that the pattern of probity, the virtuous Southey himself, might in such circumstances be found, under cover of night, lugging his prize landwards from its retreat beneath the rocks. Unquestionably, at one time certain parcels from Portugal—only of such a size as could be carried under the arm—were silently brought ashore to the defrauding of the revenue, and somehow found their way, by-and-by, to Greta Hall. "We maintain a trade," says the Governor of the Strangers' House in Bacon's philosophical romance, "not for gold, silver, or jewels, nor for silks, nor for spices, nor any other commodity of matter, but only for God's first creature, which was *light*." Such, too, was Southey's trade, and he held that God's first creature is free to travel unchallenged by revenue-cutter.

"Why, Montesinos," asks the ghostly Sir Thomas More in one of Southey's *Colloquies*, "with these books and the delight you take in their constant society, what have you to covet or desire?" "Nothing," is the answer, ". . . except more books." When Southey, in 1805, went to see Walter Scott, it occurred to him in Edinburgh that, having had neither new coat nor hat since little Edith was born, he must surely be in want of both; and here, in the metropolis of the North, was an opportunity of arraying him-

self to his desire. "Howbeit," he says, "on considering the really respectable appearance which my old ones made for a traveller—and considering, moreover, that as learning was better than house or land, it certainly must be much better than fine clothes—I laid out all my money in books, and came home to wear out my old wardrobe in the winter." De Quincey called Southey's library his wife, and in a certain sense it was wife and mistress and mother to him. The presence and enjoying of his books was not the sole delight they afforded; there was also the pursuit, the surprisal, the love-making or wooing. And at last, in his hours of weakness, once more a little child, he would walk slowly round his library, looking at his cherished volumes, taking them down mechanically, and when he could no longer read, pressing them to his lips. In happier days the book stalls of London knew the tall figure, the rapid stride, the quick-seeing eye, the eager fingers. Lisbon, Paris, Milan, Amsterdam, contributed to the rich confusion that, from time to time, burdened the floors of library and bedrooms and passages in Greta Hall. Above all, he was remembered at Brussels by that best of bookmen, Verbeyst. What mattered it that Verbeyst was a sloven, now receiving his clients with gaping shirt, and now with stockingless feet? Did he not duly honour letters, and had he not 300,000 volumes from which to choose? If in a moment of prudential weakness one failed to carry off such a treasure as the *Monumenta Boica* or Colgar's *Irish Saints*, there was a chance that in Verbeyst's vast store-house the volume might lurk for a year or two. And Verbeyst loved his books, only less than he loved his handsome, good-natured wife, who for a liberal customer would fetch the bread and burgundy. Henry Taylor dwelt in Robert Southey's heart of hearts; but let not Henry Taylor treasonably hint that Verbeyst, the prince of booksellers, had not a prince's politeness of punctuality. If sundry books promised had not arrived, it was because they were not easily procured; moreover, the good-natured wife had died—*bien des malheurs*, and Verbeyst's heart was fallen into a lethargy. "Think ill of our fathers which are in the Row, think ill of John Murray, think ill of Colburn, think ill of the whole race of bibliopoles except Verbeyst, who is always to be thought of with liking and respect." And when the bill of lading, coming slow but sure, announced that saints and chroniclers and poets were on their way, "by this day month," wrote Southey, "they will probably be here; then shall I be happier than if his Majesty King George the Fourth were to give orders that I should be clothed in purple, and sleep upon gold, and have a chain upon my neck, and sit next him because of my wisdom, and be called his cousin."

Thus the four thousand volumes, which lay piled about the library when Southey first gathered his possessions together, grew and grew, year after year, until the grand total amounted up to eight, to ten, to fourteen thousand. Now Kirke White's brother Neville sends him a gift of Sir William Jones's works, thirteen volumes, in binding of bewildering loveliness. Now Landor ships from some

Italian port a chest containing treasures of less dubious value than the Raffaelles and Leonardos, with which he liberally supplied his art-loving friends. Oh, the joy of opening such a chest; of discovering the glorious folios; of glancing with the shy amorousness of first desire at title-page and colophon; of growing familiarity; of tracing out the history suggested by book-plate or autograph; of finding a lover's excuses for cropped margin, or water-stain, or worm-hole! Then the calmer happiness of arranging his favourites on new shelves; of taking them down again, after supper, in the season of meditation and currant-rum; and of wondering for which among his father's books Herbert will care most when all of them shall be his own. "It would please you," Southey writes to his old comrade, Bedford, "to see such a display of literary wealth, which is at once the pride of my eye, and the joy of my heart, and the food of my mind; indeed, more than metaphorically, meat, drink, and clothes for me and mine. I verily believe that no one in my station was ever so rich before, and I am very sure that no one in any station had ever a more thorough enjoyment of riches of any kind or in any way."

Southey's Spanish and Portuguese collection—if Heber's great library be set aside—was probably the most remarkable gathering of such books in the possession of any private person in this country. It included several manuscripts, some of which were displayed with due distinction upon brackets. Books in white and gold—vellum or parchment bound, with gilt lettering in the old English type which Southey loved—were arranged in effective positions pyramid-wise. Southey himself had learned the mystery of book-binding, and from him his daughters acquired that art: the ragged volumes were decently clothed in coloured cotton prints; these, presenting a strange patch-work of colours, quite filled one room, which was known as the Cottonian Library. "Paul," a book-room on the ground-floor, had been so called because "Peter," the organ-room, was robbed to fit it with books. "Paul is a great comfort to us, and being dressed up with Peter's property, makes a most respectable appearance, and receives that attention which is generally shown to the youngest child. The study has not actually been Petered on Paul's account, but there has been an exchange negotiated which we think is for their mutual advantage. Twenty gilt volumes, from under the 'Beauties of England and Wales,' have been marched down-stairs rank and file, and their place supplied by the long set of Lope de Vega with green backs."

Southey's books, as he assures his ghostly monitor in the *Colloquies*, were not drawn up on his shelves for display, however much the pride of the eye might be gratified in beholding them; they were on actual service. Generations might pass away before some of them would again find a reader; in their mountain home they were prized and known as perhaps they never had been known before. Not a few of the volumes had been cast up from the wreck of family or convent libraries during the Revolution. "Yonder Acta Sanctorum belonged to the Capuchines at Ghent.

This book of St. Bridget's Revelations, in which not only all the initial letters are illuminated, but every capital throughout the volume was coloured, came from the Carmelite Nunnery at Bruges. . . . Here are books from Colbert's library; here others from the Lamoignon one. . . . Yonder Chronicle History of King D. Manoel, by Damian de Goes; and yonder General History of Spain, by Esteban de Garibay, are signed by their respective authors. . . . This Copy of Casaubon's Epistles was sent to me from Florence by Walter Landor. He had perused it carefully, and to that perusal we are indebted for one of the most pleasing of his Conversations. . . . Here is a book with which Lauderdale amused himself, when Cromwell kept him in prison in Windsor Castle. . . . Here I possess these gathered treasures of time, the harvest of many generations, laid up in my garners; and when I go to the window, there is the lake, and the circle of the mountains, and the illimitable sky."

Not a few of his books were dead, and to live among these was like living among the tombs; "Behold, this also is vanity," Southey makes confession. But when Sir Thomas questions, "Has it proved to you 'vexation of spirit' also?" the Cumberland mountain-dweller breaks forth: "Oh no! for never can any man's life have been passed more in accord with his own inclinations, nor more answerably to his desires. Excepting that peace which, through God's infinite mercy, is derived from a higher source, it is to literature, humanly speaking, that I am beholden, not only for the means of subsistence, but for every blessing which I enjoy; health of mind and activity of mind, contentment, cheerfulness, continual employment, and therefore continual pleasure. *Suavissima vita indies sentire se fieri meliorem;* and this, as Bacon has said and Clarendon repeated, is the benefit that a studious man enjoys in retirement." Such a grave gladness underlay all Southey's frolic moods, and in union with a clear-sighted acceptance of the conditions of human happiness—its inevitable shocks, its transitory nature as far as it belongs to man's life on earth—made up part of his habitual temper.

Southey coursed from page to page with a greyhound's speed; a tiny *s* pencilled in the margin served to indicate what might be required for future use. Neatness he had learnt from Miss Tyler long ago; and by experience he acquired his method. On a slip of paper which served as marker he would note the pages to which he needed to return. In the course of a few hours he had classified and arranged everything in a book which it was likely he would ever want. A reference to the less important passages sufficed; those of special interest were transcribed by his wife, or one of his daughters, or more frequently by Southey himself; finally, these transcripts were brought together in packets under such headings as would make it easy to discover any portion of their contents.

Such was his ordinary manner of eviscerating an author, but it was otherwise with the writers of his affection. On some—such

as Jackson and Jeremy Taylor—"he *fed*," as he expressed it, "slowly and carefully, dwelling on the page, and taking in its contents, deeply and deliberately, like an epicure with his wine 'searching the subtle flavour.'" Such chosen writers remained for all times and seasons faithful and cherished friends :—

> "With them I take delight in weal,
> And seek relief in woe;
> And while I understand and feel
> How much to them I owe,
> My cheeks have often been bedewed
> With tears of thankful gratitude."

"If I were confined to a score of English books," says Southey, "Sir Thomas Browne would, I think, be one of them; nay, probably it would be one if the selection were cut down to twelve. My library, if reduced to those bounds, would consist of Shakspeare, Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton; Jackson, Jeremy Taylor, and South; Isaac Walton, Sidney's Arcadia, Fuller's Church History, and Sir Thomas Browne; and what a wealthy and well-stored mind would that man have, what an inexhaustible reservoir, what a Bank of England to draw upon for profitable thoughts and delightful associations, who should have fed upon them!" It must have gone hard with Southey, in making out this list, to exclude Clarendon, and doubtless if the choice were not limited to books written in English, the Utopia would have urged its claim to admission. With less difficulty he could skip the whole of the eighteenth century. From *Samson Agonistes* to *The Task*, there was no English poem which held a foremost place in his esteem. Berkeley and Butler he valued highly; but Robert South seemed to him the last of the race of the giants. An ancestral connection with Locke was not a source of pride to Southey; he respected neither the philosopher's politics nor his metaphysics; still, it is pleasant, he says, to hear of somebody between one's self and Adam who has left a name.

Four volumes of what are called Southey's *Common-place Books* have been published, containing some three thousand double-column pages; and these are but a selection from the total mass of his transcripts. It is impossible to give a notion of a miscellany drawn from so wide-ranging a survey of poetry, biography, history, travels, topography, divinity, not in English alone, but also in Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese. Yet certain main lines can be traced which give some meaning to this huge accumulation. It is easy to perceive that the collector wrought under an historical bias, and that social, literary, and ecclesiastical history were the directions in which the historical tendency found its play. Such work of transcribing, though it did not rest Southey's hand, was a relief to his mind after the excitement of composition, and some of it may pass for a kind of busy idleness; but most of his transcripts were made with a definite purpose—that of furnishing

materials for work either actually accomplished or still in prospect, when at last the brain grew dull and the fingers slack. "I am for ever making collections," he writes, "and storing up materials which may not come into use till the Greek Calends. And this I have been doing for five-and-twenty years! It is true that I draw daily upon my hoards, and should be poor without them; but in prudence I ought now to be working up those materials rather than adding to so much dead stock." When Ticknor visited him in 1819, Southey opened for the young American his great bundles of manuscript materials for the *History of Portugal*, and the *History of the Portuguese East Indies*. Southey had charmed him by the kindness of his reception; by the air of culture and of goodness in his home; by his talk, bright and eager, "for the quickness of his mind expresses itself in the fluency of his utterance; and yet he is ready upon almost any subject that can be proposed to him, from the extent of his knowledge." And now, when Ticknor saw spread before him the evidence of such unexampled industry, a kind of bewilderment took possession of him. "Southey," he writes in his diary, "is certainly an extraordinary man, one of those whose characters I find it difficult to comprehend, because I hardly know how such elements can be brought together, such rapidity of mind with such patient labour and wearisome exactness, so mild a disposition with so much nervous excitability, and a poetical talent so elevated with such an immense mass of minute, dull learning."

If Ticknor had been told that this was due to Epictetus, it might have puzzled him still more; but it is certain that only through the strenuous appliance of will to the formation of character could Southey have grown to be what he was. He had early been possessed by the belief that he must not permit himself to become the slave or the victim of sensibility, but that in the little world of man there are two powers ruling by a Divine right—reason and conscience, in loyal obedience to which lies our highest freedom. Then, too, the circumstances of his life prompted him to self-mastery and self-management. That he should every day overtake a vast amount of work, was not left to his choosing or declining—it was a matter of necessity; to accomplish this, he must get all possible advantage out of his rapidity of intellect and his energy of feeling, and at the same time he must never put an injurious strain on these. It would not do for Southey to burn away to-day in some white flame of excitement the nerve which he needed for use to-morrow. He could not afford to pass a sleepless night. If his face glowed or his brain throbbed, it was a warning that he had gone far enough. His very susceptibility to nervous excitement rendered caution the more requisite. William Taylor had compared him to the mimosa. Hazlitt remembered him with a quivering lip, a hectic flush upon his cheek, a roving fire in his eye, a falcon glance, a look at once aspiring and dejected. Crabb Robinson found in him a likeness to Shelley. Humphry Davy had proved the fineness of his sensibility by that odd neurometer, the

nitrous oxide. "The truth is," writes Southey, "that though some persons, whose knowledge of me is scarcely skin-deep. suppose I have no nerves, because I have great self-control as far as regards the surface, if it were not for great self-management. and what may be called a strict intellectual regimen, I should very soon be in a pedlorable state of what is called nervous disease, and this would have been the case any time during the last twenty years." And again: "A man had better break a bone, or even lose a limb, than shake his nervous system. I, who never talk about my nerves (and am supposed to have none by persons who see as far into me as they do into a stone wall), know this." Southey could not afford to play away his health at hazard, and then win it back in the lounge of some foreign watering-place. His plan, on the contrary, was to keep it, and to think about it as little as possible. A single prescription sufficed for a life-time—*In labore quies.* "I think I may lay claim," he says, "to the praise of self-management both in body and mind without paying too much attention to either—exercising a diseased watchfulness, or playing any tricks with either." It would not have been difficult for Southey, with such a temperament as his, to have wrecked himself at the outset of his career. With beautiful foiled lives of young men Southey had a peculiar sympathy. But the gods sometimes gives white hairs as an aureole to their favoured ones. Perhaps, on the whole, for him it was not only more prudent but also more chivalrous to study to be quiet; to create a home for those who looked to him for security; to guard the happiness of tender women; to make smooth ways for the feet of little children; to hold hands in old age with the friends of his youth; to store his mind with treasures of knowledge; to strengthen and chasten his own heart; to grow yearly in love for his country and her venerable heritage of manners, virtue, laws; to add to her literature the outcome of an adult intellect and character; and having fought a strenuous and skilful fight, to fall as one whose sword an untimely stroke has shattered in his hand.

CHAPTER V.

WAYS OF LIFE AT KESWICK, 1803—1839 (*continued*).

THE texture of Southey's life was so uniform, the round from morning till night repeated itself with so much regularity, that one day may stand as representative of a thousand. We possess his record of how the waking hours went by when he was about thirty years old, and a similar record written when he was twice that age. His surroundings had changed in the mean time, and he himself had changed; the great bare room which he used from the first as a study, fresh plastered in 1804, with the trowel-lines on the ceiling pierced by the flaws of winter, containing two chairs and a little table—"God help me!" he exclaims, "I look in it like a cock-robin in a church"—this room had received, long before 1834, its lining of comely books, its white and gold pyramids, its brackets, its cherished portraits. The occupant of the study had the same spare frame, the same aspect of lightness and of strength, the same full eyebrows shadowing the dark-brown eyes, the same variously expressive muscular mouth; the youthful wildness in his countenance had given place to a thoughtful expression, and the abundant hair still clustering over his great brow was snowy white. Whatever had changed, his habits—though never his tyrants—remained, with some variations in detail, the same. "My actions," he writes to a friend not very long after his arrival in Keswick, "are as regular as those of St. Dunstan's quarter-boys. Three pages of history after breakfast (equivalent to five in small quarto printing); then to transcribe and copy for the press, or to make my selections and biographies, or what else suits my humour till dinner-time; from dinner to tea I read, write letters, see the newspaper, and very often indulge in a siesta—for sleep agrees with me. . . After tea I go to poetry, and correct, and rewrite, and copy till I am tired, and then turn to anything else till supper; and this is my life—which, if it be not a very merry one, is yet as happy as heart could wish." "See how the day is disposed of!" begins the later record: "I get out of bed as the clock strikes six, and shut the house-door after me as it strikes seven.* After two hours with Davies, home to breakfast, after which Cuthbert engages me till about half-past

* *I. e.*, to go to Davies' lodgings; Davies, Dr. Bell's Secretary, was engaged in arranging a vast accumulation of papers with a view to forwarding Southey in his *Life of Bell.*

ten, and when the post brings no letters that either interest or trouble me (for of the latter I have many), by eleven I have done with the newspaper, and can then set about what is properly the business of the day. But letters are often to be written, and I am liable to frequent interruptions; so that there are not many mornings in which I can command from two to three unbroken hours at the desk. At two I take my daily walk, be the weather what it may, and when the weather permits, with a book in my hand: dinner at four, read about half an hour; then take to the sofa with a different book, and after a few pages get my soundest sleep, till summoned to tea at six. My best time during the winter is by candlelight; twilight interferes with it a little; and in the season of company I can never count upon an evening's work. Supper at half-past nine, after which I read an hour, and then to bed. The greatest part of my miscellaneous work is done in the odds and ends of time."

It was part of Southey's regimen to carry on several works at once; this he found to be economy of time, and he believed it necessary for the preservation for his health. Whenever one object entirely occupied his attention, it haunted him, oppressed him, troubled his dreams. The remedy was simple—to do one thing in the morning, another in the evening. To lay down poetry and presently to attack history seems feasible, and no ill policy for one who is forced to take all he can out of himself; but Sou they would turn from one poetical theme to another, and could day by day advance with a pair of epics. This was a source of unfailing wonder to Landor. "When I write a poem," he says, "my heart and my feelings are upon it. . . . High poems will not admit flirtation." Little by little was Southey's way, and so he got on with many things. "Last night," he writes to Bedford, "I began the Preface [to *Specimens of English Poets*]—huzza! And now, Grosvenor, let me tell you what I have to do. I am writing—1. *The History of Portugal;* 2. *The Chronicle of the Cid;* 3. *The Curse of Kehama;* 4. *Espriella's Letters.* Look you, all these *I am* writing. . . . By way of interlude comes in this preface. Don't swear, and bid me do one thing at a time. I tell you I can't afford to do one thing at a time—no, nor two neither; and it is only by doing many things that I contrive to do so much: for I cannot work long together at anything without hurting myself, and so I do everything by heats; then, by the time I am tired of one, my inclination for another is come round." A strong, deliberate energy, accordingly, is at the back of all Southey's work; but not that blind creative rapture which will have its own way, and leaves its subject weak but appeased. "In the daytime I laboured," says Landor, "and at night unburdened my soul, shedding many tears. My *Tiberius* has so shaken me at last that the least thing affects me violently." Southey shrank back from such agitations. A great Elizabethan poet is described by one of his contemporaries as one standing

"Up to the chin in the Pierian flood."

Southey did not wade so far; he stepped down calmly until the smooth waters touched his waist; dipped seven times, and returned to the bank. It was a beautiful and an elevating rite; but the waves sing with lyric lips only in the midmost stream; and he who sings with them, and as swift as they, need not wonder if he sink after a time, faint, breathless, delighted.

Authorship, it must be remembered, was Southey's trade, the business of his life, and this, at least, he knew how to conduct well. To be a prophet and call down flame from heaven, and disappear in a whirlwind and a chariot of fire, is sublime; but prophets can go in the strength of a single meal for more days and nights than one would choose to name in this incredulous age, and, if they eat, there are ravens to bring them food. No ravens brought loaves to Greta Hall; and Southey had an unprophet-like craving for the creature comforts of beef and bread, for wine if it might be had, and a supper for one meditative tumbler of punch or black-currant rum. Besides, what ravens were ever pledged to feed a prophet's sisters-in-law, or his nephews and nieces? Let it be praise enough for much of Southey's performance that he did good work in workmanlike fashion. To shift knowledge into more convenient positions is to render no unimportant service to mankind. In the gathering of facts, Southey was both swift and patient in an extraordinary degree; he went often alone, and he went far; in the art of exposition he was unsurpassed; and his fine moral feeling and profound sympathy with elementary justice created, as De Quincey has observed, a soul under what else might well be denominated, Miltonically, "the ribs of death." From the mending of his pens to the second reading aloud of his proof-sheets, attending as he read to the fall of each word upon the ear, Southey had a diligent care for everything that served to make his work right. He wrote at a moderate pace; re-wrote; wrote a third time if it seemed desirable; corrected with minute supervision. He accomplished so much, not because he produced with unexampled rapidity, but because he worked regularly, and never fell into a mood of apathy or ennui. No periods of tempestuous vacancy lay between his periods of patient labour. One work always overlapped another—thus, that first idle day, the begetter of so many idle descendants, never came. But let us hear the craftsman giving a lesson in the knack of authorship to his brother, Dr. Henry Southey, who has a notion of writing something on the Crusades:

"Now then, supposing that you will seriously set about the *Crusades*, I will give you such directions in the art of historical book-keeping as may save time and facilitate labour.

"Make your writing-books in foolscap quarto, and write only on one side of a leaf; draw a line down the margin, marking off space enough for your references, which should be given at the end of every paragraph; noting page, book, or chapter of the author referred to. This minuteness is now demanded, and you will yourself find it useful; for, in transcribing or in correcting proofs, it is often requisite to turn to the original authori

ties. Take the best author; that is to say, the one that has written most at length of all the *original* authors, upon the particular point of time on which you are employed, and draw up your account from him; then, on the opposite page, correct and amplify this from every other who has written on the same subject. This page should be divided into two columns, one of about two-thirds of its breadth, the other the remaining one. You are thus enabled to *add* to your *additions*.

"One of these books you should have for your geography; that is to say, for collecting descriptions of all the principal scenes of action (which must be done from books of travels), their situation, their strength, their previous history, and in the notes, their present state. [Another book—he adds in a subsequent letter—you must keep for the bibliography of your subject,]

"These descriptions you can insert in their proper places when you transcribe. Thus, also, you should collect accounts of the different tribes and dynasties which you have occasion to mention. In this manner the information which is only to be got at piecemeal, and oftentimes incidentally, when you are looking for something else, is brought together with least trouble, and almost imperceptibly,

"All relative matter not absolutely essential to the subject should go in the form of supplementary notes, and these you may make as amusing as you please, the more so, and the more curious, the better. Much trouble is saved by writing them on separate bits of paper, each the half of a quarter of a foolscap sheet—numbering them, and making an index of them; in this manner they are ready for use when they are wanted.

"It was some time before I fell unto this system of bookkeeping, and I believe no better can be desired. A Welsh triad might comprehend all the rules of style. Say what you have to say as *perspicuously* as possible, as *briefly* as possible, and as *rememberably* as possible, and take no other thought about it. Omit none of those little circumstances which give life to narration, and bring old manners, old feelings, and old times before your eyes."

Winter was Southey's harvest season. Then for weeks no visitor knocked at Greta Hall, except perhaps Mr. Wordsworth, who had plodded all the way from Rydal on his indefatigable legs. But in summer interruptions were frequent, and Southey, who had time for everything, had time to spare not only for friends but for strangers. The swarm of lakers was, indeed, not what it is now-a-days, but to a studious man it was, perhaps, not less formidable. By Gray's time the secret of the lakes had been found out; and if the visitors were fewer, they were less swift upon the wing, and their rank or fame often entitled them to particular attention. Coroneted coaches rolled into Keswick, luggage-laden; the American arrived sometimes to make sure that Derwentwater would not be missed out of Lake Michigan, sometimes to see King George's laureate; and cultured Americans were particularly welcome to Southey. Long-vacation reading-parties from Oxford and Cambridge—known among the good Cumberland folk as the "cathedrals"—made Keswick a resort. Well for them if, provided with an introduction, they were invited to dine at Greta Hall, were permitted to gaze on the choice old Spaniards, and to converse with the erlauate's stately Edith and her learned cousin. Woe to them

if, after the entanglements of a Greek chorus or descriptions of the temperate man and the magnanimous man, they sought to restore their tone by a cat-worrying expedition among the cottages of Keswick. Southey's cheek glowed, his eye darkened and flashed, if he chanced to witness cruelty; some of the Cambridge "cathedrals" who received a letter concerning cats in July, 1834, may still bear the mark of its leaded thong in their moral fibre, and be the better for possessing Southey's sign-manual.

A young step-child of Oxford visited Keswick in the winter of 1811–12, and sought the acquaintance of the author of *Thalaba*. Had Southey been as intolerant or as unsympathetic as some have represented him, he could not have endured the society of one so alien in opinion and so outspoken as Shelley. But courtesy, if it were nothing more, was at least part of Southey's self-respect; his intolerance towards persons was, in truth, towards a certain ideal, a certain group of opinions; when hand touched hand and eye met eye, all intolerance vanished, and he was open to every gracious attraction of character and manner. There was much in Shelley that could not fail to interest Southey; both loved poetry, and both felt the proud, secluded grandeur of Landor's verse; both loved men, and thought the world wants mending, though their plans of reform might differ. That Shelley was a rebel expelled from Oxford did not shock Southey, who himself had been expelled from Westminster and rejected at Christ Church. Shelley's opinions were crude and violent, but their spirit was generous, and such opinions held by a youth in his teens generally mean no more than that his brain is working and his heart ardent. Shelley's rash marriage reminded Southey of another marriage, celebrated at Bristol some fifteen years ago, which proved that rashness is not always folly. The young man's admiration of *Thalaba* spoke well for him; and certainly during the earlier weeks of their intercourse there was on Shelley's part a becoming deference to one so much his superior in years and in learning, deference to one who had achieved much while Shelley still only dreamed of achievement. Southey thought he saw in the revolutionary enthusiast an image of his former self. "Here," he says, "is a man at Keswick who acts upon me as my own ghost would do. He is just what I was in 1794. His name is Shelley, son to the member for Shoreham. . . . At present he has got to the Pantheistic stage of philosophy, and in the course of a week I expect he will be a Berkeleyan, for I have put him upon a course of Berkeley. It has surprised him a good deal to meet, for the first time in his life, with a man who perfectly understands him and does him full justice. I tell him that all the difference between us is that he is nineteen and I am thirty-seven; and I daresay it will not be very long before I shall succeed in convincing him that he may be a true philosopher and do a great deal of good with 6000*l.* a year; the thought of which troubles him a great deal more at present than ever the want of sixpence (for I have known such a want) did me." There were other differences between Robert Southey and the in-

constant star that passed by Greta Hall than that of years. Southey had quickly learned to put a bound to his desires, and within that bound to work out for himself a possession of measureless worth. It seemed to him part of a man's virtue to adhere loyally to the bond signed for each of us when we enter life. Is our knowledge limited—then let us strive within those limits. Can we never lay hands on the absolute good—then let us cherish the good things that are ours. Do we hold our dearest possessions on a limited tenure—that is hard, but is it not in the bond? How faint a loyalty is his who merely yields obedience perforce! let us rather cast in our will, unadulterate and whole, with that of our divine Leader; *sursum corda*—there is a heaven above. But Shelley—the nympholept of some radiant ante-natal sphere—fled through his brief years ever in pursuit of his lost lady of light: and for him loyalty to the bond of life seemed to mean a readiness to forget all things, however cherished, so soon as they had fulfilled their service of speeding him on towards the unattainable. It could not but be that men living under rules so diverse should before long find themselves far asunder. But they parted in 1812 in no spirit of ill-will. Southey was already a state-pensioner and a champion of the party of order in the *Quarterly Review;* this did not prevent the young apostle of liberty and fraternity from entering his doors, and enjoying Mrs. Southey's tea-cakes. Irish affairs were earnestly discussed; but Southey, who had written generously of Emmett both in his verse and in the *Quarterly*, could not be hostile to one whose illusions were only over-sanguine; and while the veritable Southey was before Shelley's eyes, he could not discern the dull hireling, the venomous apostate, the cold-blooded assassin, of freedom conjured up by Byron and others to bear Southey's name.

Three years later Shelley presented his *Alastor* to the laureate, and Southey duly acknowledged the gift. The elder poet was never slow to recognise genius in young men, but conduct was to him of higher importance than genius; he deplored some acts in Shelley's life which seemed to result directly from opinions professed at Keswick in 1811—opinions then interpreted as no more than the disdain of checks felt by every spirited boy. Southey heard no more from him until a letter came from Pisa inquiring whether Shelley's former entertainer at Keswick were his recent critic of the *Quarterly Review*, with added comments, courteous but severe, on Southey's opinions. The reply was that Southey had not written the paper, and had never in any of his writings alluded to Shelley in any way. A second letter followed on each side, the elder man pleading, exhorting, warning; the younger justifying himself, and returning to the attack. "There the correspondence ended. On Shelley's part it was conducted with the courtesy which was natural to him; on mine, in the spirit of one who was earnestly admonishing a fellow-creature."

Much of Southey's time—his most valued possession—was given to his correspondents. Napoleon's plan of answering let-

ters, according to Bourrienne, was to let them lie unopened for six weeks, by which time nine out of ten had answered themselves, or had been answered by history. Coleridge's plan—says De Quincey—was shorter; he opened none, and answered none. To answer all forthwith was the habit of Southey. Thinking doubtless of their differences in such minor moralities of life, Coleridge writes of his brother-in-law:—"Always employed, his friends find him always at leisure. No less punctual in trifles than steadfast in the performance of highest duties, he inflicts none of those small pains which irregular men scatter about them, and which in the aggregate so often become formidable obstacles both to happiness and utility; while, on the contrary, he bestows all the pleasures and inspires all that ease of mind on those around or connected with him, which perfect consistency and (if such a word might be framed) absolute *reliability*, equally in small as in great concerns, cannot but inspire and bestow; when this, too, is softened without being weakened by kindness and gentleness." Odd indeed were some of the communications for which the poet-laureate, the Tory reformer, and the loyal son of the Church was the mark. Now a clergyman writes to furnish him with Scriptural illustrations of *Thalaba;* now another clergyman favours him with an ingenious parallel between Kehama and Nebuchadnezzar; now some anonymous person seriously urges on Southey his duty of making a new version of the Psalms, and laying it before the King to be approved and appointed to be sung in churches; now a lunatic poet desires his brother to procure for his title-page the names of Messrs. Longman and Rees; now a poor woman, wife to a blind Homer, would have him led carefully to the summit of Parnassus; now a poor French devil volunteers to translate *Roderick* if the author will have the goodness to send him a copy—even a defective copy—which he pledges himself religiously to return; now a Yankee, who keeps an exhibition at Philadelphia, modestly asks for Southey's painted portrait, "which is very worthy a place in my collection;" now a herdsman in the vale of Clwyd requests permission to send specimens of prose and verse—his highest ambition is the acquaintance of learned men; now the Rev Peter Hall begs to inform Southey that he has done more harm to the cause of religion than any writer of the age; now a lover requests him to make an acrostic on the name of a young lady—the lover's rival has beaten him in writing verses; enclosed is the honorarium. Southey's amiability at this point gave way; he did not write the acrostic, and the money he spent on blankets for poor women in Keswick. A society for the suppression of albums was proposed by Southey; yet sometimes he was captured in the gracious mood. Samuel Simpson, of Liverpool, begs for a few lines in his handwriting "to fill a vacancy in his collection of autographs, without which his series must remain for ever most incomplete." The laureate replies:

> "Inasmuch as you Sam, a descendant of Sim,
> For collecting handwritings have taken a whim,

And to me, Robert Southey, petition have made,
In a civil and nicely-penned letter—post paid—
That I to your album so gracious would be
As to fill up a page there appointed for me,
Five couplets I sent you, by aid of the Nine—
They will cost you in postage a penny a line:—
At Keswick, October the sixth, they were done,
One thousand eight hundred and twenty and one."

Some of Southey's distractions were of his own inviting. Soon after his arrival at Keswick, a tiny volume of poems, entitled *Clifton Grove*, attracted his attention; its author was an undergraduate of Cambridge. The *Monthly Review* having made the discovery that it rhymed in one place *boy* and *sky*, dismissed the book contemptuously. Southey could not bear to think that the hopes of a lad of promise should be blasted, and he wrote to Henry Kirke White, encouraging him, and offering him help, towards a future volume. The cruel dulness of the reviewer sat heavily on the poor boy's spirits, and these unexpected words of cheer came with most grateful effect. It soon appeared, however, that Southey's services must be slight, for his new acquaintance was taken out of his hands by Mr. Simeon, the nursing-father of Evangelicalism. At no time had Southey any leanings towards the Clapham Sect; and so, while he tried to be of use to Kirke White indirectly, their correspondence ceased. When the lad, in every way lacking pith and substance, and ripening prematurely in a heated atmosphere, drooped and died, Southey was not willing that he should be altogether forgotten; he wrote offering to look over whatever papers there might be, and to give an opinion on them. "Down came a box-full," he tells Duppa, "the sight of which literally made my heart ache and my eyes overflow, for never did I behold such proofs of human industry. To make short, I took the matter up with interest, collected his letters, and have, at the expense of more time than such a poor fellow as myself can very well afford, done what his family are very grateful for, and what I think the world will thank me for too. Of course I have done it gratuitously. . . . . That I should become, and that voluntarily too, an editor of Methodistical and Calvinistic letters, is a thing which, when I think of, excites the same sort of smile that the thought of my pension does." A brief statement that his own views on religion differed widely from those of Kirke White sufficed to save Southey's integrity. The genius of the dead poet he overrated; it was an error which the world has since found time to correct.

This was but one of a series of many instances in which Southey, stemming the pressure of his own engagements, asserted the right to be generous of his time and strength and substance to those who had need of such help as a sound heart and a strong arm can give. William Roberts, a Bristol bank-clerk, dying of consumption at nineteen, left his only possession, some manuscript poems, in trust to be published for the benefit of a sister whom he passionately loved. Southey was consulted, and at once bestirred himself on

behalf of the projected volume. Herbert Knowles, an orphan lad at school in Yorkshire, had hoped to go as a sizar to St. John's; his relations were unable to send him; could he help himself by publishing a poem? might he dedicate it to the laureate? The poem came to Southey, who found it "brimful of power and of promise;" he represented to Herbert the folly of publishing, promised ten pounds himself, and procured from Rogers and Earl Spencer twenty more. Herbert Knowles, in a wise and manly letter, begged that great things might not be expected of him; he would not be idle, his University career should be at least respectable:—"Suffice it, then, to say, *I thank you from my heart;* let time and my future conduct tell the rest." Death came to arbitrate between his hopes and fears. James Dusautoy, another schoolboy, one of ten children of a retired officer, sent specimens of his verse, asking Southey's opinion on certain poetical plans. His friends thought the law the best profession for him; how could he make literature help him forward in his profession? Southey again advised against publication, but by a well-timed effort enabled him to enter Emanuel College. Dusautoy, after a brilliant promise, took fever, died, and was buried, in acknowledgment of his character and talents, in the college cloisters. When at Harrogate in the summer of 1827, Southey received a letter, written with much modesty and good feeling, from John Jones, an old serving-man; he enclosed a poem on "The Redbreast," and would take the liberty, if permitted, to offer other manuscripts for inspection. Touches of true observation and natural feeling in the verses on the little bird with "look oblique and prying head and gentle affability" pleased Southey, and he told his humble applicant to send his manuscript book, warning him, however, not to expect that such poems would please the public—"the time for them was gone by, and whether the public had grown wiser in these matters or not, it had certainly become less tolerant and less charitable." By procuring subscribers and himself contributing an Introductory Essay on the lives and works of our Uneducated Poets, Southey secured a slender fortune for the worthy old man, who laid the table none the less punctually because he loved Shakspeare and the Psalter, or carried in his head some simple rhymes of his own. It pleased Southey to show how much intellectual pleasure and moral improvement connected with such pleasure are within reach of the humblest: thus a lesson was afforded to those who would have the March of Intellect beaten only to the tune of *Ca ira.* "Before I conclude"—so the Introduction draws to an end—"I must, in my own behalf, give notice to all whom it may concern that I, Robert Southey, Poet-laureate, being somewhat advanced in years, and having business enough of my own fully to occupy as much time as can be devoted to it, consistency with a due regard to health, do hereby decline perusing or inspecting any manuscript from any person whatsoever, and desire that no application on that score may be made to me from this time forth; this resolution, which for most just cause is taken and here notified, being, like the laws of the Medes and the Persians, not to be changed."

It was some time after this public announcement that a hand, which may have trembled while yet it was very brave and resolute, dropped into the little post-office at Haworth, in Yorkshire, a packet for Robert Southey. His bold truthfulness, his masculine self-control, his strong heart, his domestic temper sweet and venerable, his purity of manners, a certain sweet austerity, attracted to him women of fine sensibility and genius who would fain escape from their own falterings and temerities under the authority of a faithful director. Already Maria del Occidente, "the most impassioned and most imaginative of all poetesses," had poured into his ear the tale of her slighted love. Newly come from Paris, and full of enthusiasms for the Poles, she hastened to Keswick to see in person her sympathetic adviser; she proved, says Southey, a most interesting person of the mildest and gentlest manners. With him she left, on returning to America, her *Zophiel* in manuscript, the publication of which he superintended. "*Zophiel*, Southey says, is by some Yankee woman"—Charles Lamb breaks forth—"as if there ever had been a woman capable of anything so great!" Now, in 1837, a woman of finer spirit, and capable of higher things than *Zophiel*, addressed a letter to Robert Southey, asking his judgment of her powers as disclosed in the poems which she forwarded. For some weeks Charlotte Bronte waited, until almost all hope of a reply was lost. At length the verdict came. Charlotte Bronte's verse was assuredly written with her left hand; her passionate impulses, crossed and checked by fiery fiats of the will, would not mould themselves into little stanzas; the little stanzas must be correct, therefore they must reject such irregular heavings and swift repressions of the heart. Southey's delay in replying had been caused by absence from home. A little personal knowledge of a poet in the decline of life might have tempered her enthusiasm; yet he is neither a disappointed nor a discontented man; she will never hear from him any chilling sermons on the text, All is vanity; the faculty of verse she possesses in no inconsiderable degree; but this, since the beginning of the century, has grown to be no rare possession; let her beware of making literature her profession, check day-dreams, and find her chief happiness in her womanly duties; then she may write poetry for its own sake, not in a spirit of emulation, not through a passion for celebrity; the less celebrity is aimed at, the more it is likely to be deserved. "Mr. Southey's letter," said Charlotte Brontë, many years later, "was kind and admirable, a little stringent, but it did me good." She wrote again, striving to repress a palpitating joy and pride in the submission to her director's counsel, and the sacrifice of her cherished hopes; telling him more of her daily life, of her obedience to the day's duty, her efforts to be sensible and sober; "I had not ventured," she says, "to hope for such a reply—so considerate in its tone, so noble in its spirit." Once more Southey wrote, hoping that she would let him see her at the Lakes: "You would then think of me afterwards with the more good-will, because you would perceive that there is neither severity nor moroseness in the state

of mind to which years and observation have brought me. . . . And now, madam, God bless you. Farewell, and believe me to be your sincere friend, Robert Southey." It was during a visit to the Lakes that Charlotte Brontë told her biographer of these letters. But Southey lay at rest in Crosthwaite churchyard.

"My days among the dead are past"—Southey wrote, but it is evident that the living, and not those of his own household alone, claimed no inconsiderable portion of his time. Indeed, it would not be untrue to assert that few men have been more genuinely and consistently social, that few men ever yielded themselves more constantly to the pleasures of companionship. But the society he loved best was that of old and chosen friends, or if new friends, one at a time, and only one. Next to romping with my children, he said, I enjoy a *tete-à-tete* conversation with an *old* friend or a *new*. "With one I can talk of familiar subjects which we have discussed in former years, and with the other, if he have any brains, I open what to me is a new mine of thought." Miscellaneous company to a certain extent disordered and intoxicated him. He felt no temptation to say a great deal, but he would often say things strongly and emphatically, which were better left unsaid. "In my hearty hatred of assentation I commit faults of the opposite kind. Now I am sure to find this out myself, and to get out of humour with myself; what prudence I have is not ready on demand; and so it is that the society of any except my friends, though it may be sweet in the mouth, is bitter in the belly." When Coleridge, in their arguments, allowed him a word, Southey made up in weight for what was wanting in measure; he saw one fact quickly, and darted at it like a greyhound. De Quincey has described his conversation as less flowing and expansive than that of Wordsworth—more apt to close itself in a keen, sparkling, aphoristic form; consequently sooner coming to an abrupt close; "the style of his mind naturally prompts him to adopt a trenchant, pungent, aculeated form of terse, glittering, stenographic sentences—sayings which have the air of laying down the law without any *locus penitentiæ* or privilege of appeal, but are not meant to do so." The same manner, tempered and chastened by years, can be recognised in the picture of Southey drawn by his friend Sir Henry Taylor:—

"The characteristics of his manner, as of his appearance, were lightness and strength, an easy and happy composure as the accustomed mood, and much mobility at the same time, so that he could be readily excited into any degree of animation in discourse, speaking, if the subject moved him much, with extraordinary fire and force, though always in light, laconic sentences. When so moved, the fingers of his right hand often rested against his mouth and quivered through nervous susceptibility. But excitable as he was in conversation, he was never angry or irritable; nor can there be any greater mistake concerning him than that into which some persons have fallen when they have inferred, from the fiery vehemence with which he could give utterance to moral anger in verse or prose, that he was personally ill-tempered or irascible. He was, in truth, a man whom it was hardly possible to quarrel with or offend personally, and face

to face . . . He was averse from argumentation, and would commonly quit a subject, when it was passing into that shape, with a quiet and good-humoured indication of the view in which he rested. He talked most, and with most interest, about books and about public affairs; less, indeed hardly at all, about the characters and qualities of men in private life. In the society of strangers or of acquaintances, he seemed to take more interest in the subjects spoken of than in the persons present, his manner being that of natural courtesy and general benevolence without distinction of individuals. Had there been some tincture of social vanity in him, perhaps he would have been brought into closer relations with those whom he met in society; but though invariably kind and careful of their feelings, he was indifferent to the manner in which they regarded him, or (as the phrase is) to his *effect* in society; and they might, perhaps, be conscious that the kindness they received was what flowed naturally and inevitably to all, that they had nothing to give in return which was of value to him, and that no individual relations were established."

How deep and rich Southey's social nature was, his published correspondence, some four or five thousand printed pages, tells sufficiently. These letters, addressed, for the most part, to good old friends, are indeed genial, liberal of sympathy, and expecting sympathy in return; pleasantly egotistic, grave, playful, wise, pathetic, with a kind of stringent pathos showing through checks imposed by the wiser and stronger will. Southey did not squander abroad the treasures of his affection. To lavish upon casual acquaintance the outward and visible signs of friendship seemed to him a profaning of the mystery of manly love. "Your feelings," he writes to Coleridge, "go naked; I cover mine with a bear-skin; I will not say that you harden yours by your mode, but I am sure that mine are the warmer for their clothing." With strangers a certain neutral courtesy served to protect his inner self like the low leaves of his own holly-tree:

> "Below, a circling fence, its leaves are seen
> Wrinkled and keen;
> No grazing cattle through their prickly round
> Can reach to wound;"

but to those of whose goodness and love he was well assured, there were no protecting spines:

> "Gentle at home amid my friends I'd be,
> Like the high leaves upon the Holly-tree."

"Old friends and old books," he says, "are the best things that this world affords (I like old wine also), and in these I am richer than most men (the wine excepted)." In the group of Southey's friends, what first strikes one is, not that they are men of genius—although the group includes Wordsworth, and Scott, and Henry Taylor—but that they are good men. No one believed more thoroughly than Southey that goodness is a better thing than genius; yet he required in his associates some high excellence,

extraordinary kindness of disposition or strength of moral character, if not extraordinary intellect. To knit his friends in a circle was his ardent desire; in the strength of his affections time and distance made no change. An old College friend, Lightfoot, to visit Southey, made the longest journey of his life; it was eight-and-twenty years since they had met. When their hands touched, Lightfoot trembled like an aspen-leaf. "I believe," says Southey, "no men ever met more cordially after so long a separation, or enjoyed each other's society more. I shall never forget the manner in which he first met me, nor the tone in which he said, that, having now seen me, he should return home and die in peace.'" But of all friends he was most at ease with his dear Dapple, Grosvenor Bedford, who suited for every mood of mirth and sorrow. When Mrs. Southey had fallen into her sad decay, and the once joyous house was melancholy and silent, Southey turned for comfort to Bedford. Still, some of their Rabelaisian humour remained, and all their warmth of brotherly affection. "My father," says Cuthbert Southey, "was never tired of talking into Mr. Bedford's trumpet." And in more joyous days, what noise and nonsense did they not make! "Oh! Grosvenor," exclaims Southey, "is it not a pity that two men who love nonsense so cordially and naturally and *bonâ fidically* as you and I, should be three hundred miles asunder? For my part, I insist upon it that there is no sense so good as your honest, genuine nonsense."

A goodly company of friends becomes familiar to us as we read Southey's correspondence:—Wynn, wherever he was, "always doing something else," yet able, in the midst of politics and business, to find time to serve an old schoolfellow; Rickman, full of practical suggestions, and accurate knowledge and robust benevolence; John May, unfailing in kindness and fidelity; Lamb for play and pathos, and subtle criticism glancing amid the puns; William Taylor for culture and literary theory, and paradox and polysyllables; Landor for generous admiration, and kindred enthusiasms and kindred prejudices; Elmsley, and Lightfoot and Danvers for love and happy memories; Senhora Barker, the Bhow Begum, for frank familiarities, and warm, womanly services; Caroline Bowles for rarer sympathy and sacreder hopes and fears; Henry Taylor for spiritual sonship, as of a son who is also an equal; and Grosvenor Bedford for everything great and small, glad and sad, wise and foolish.

No literary rivalries or jealousies ever interrupted for a moment any friendship of Southey. Political and religious differences, which in strangers were causes of grave offence, seemed to melt away when the heretic or erring statist was a friend. But if success, fashion, flattery, tested a man, and proved him wanting, as seemed to be the case with Humphry Davy, his affection grew cold; and an habitual dereliction of social duty, such as that of Coleridge, could not but transform Southey's feeling of love to one of condemning sorrow. To his great contemporaries, Scott, Landor, Wordsworth, his admiration was freely given. "Scott," he writes, "is

very ill. He suffers dreadfully, but bears his suffering with admi rable equanimity. . . . God grant that he may recover! He is a noble and generous-hearted creature, whose like we shall not look upon again." Of Wordsworth:—"A greater poet than Wordsworth there never has been, nor ever will be." "Two or three generations must pass before the public affect to admire such poets as Milton and Wordsworth. Of such men the world scarcely produces one in a millennium. With indignation crossed by a gleam of humour, he learnt that Ebenezer Elliott, his pupil in the art of verse, had stepped forward as the lyrist of radicalism; but the feeling could not be altogether anger with which he remembered that earnest face, once seen by him at the Sheffield inn, its pale grey eyes full of fire and meaning, its expression suiting well with Elliott's frankness of manner and simplicity of character. William Taylor was one of the liberals of liberal Norwich, and dangled abroad whatever happened to be the newest paradox in religion. But neither his radicalism, nor his Pyrrhonism, nor his paradoxes, could estrange Southey. The last time the oddly-assorted pair met was in Taylor's house: the student of German criticism had found some theological novelty, and wished to draw his guest into argument; Southey parried the thrusts good-humouredly, and at last put an end to them with the words, "Taylor, come and see me at Keswick. We will ascend Skiddaw, where I shall have you nearer heaven, and we will then discuss such questions as these."

In the year 1823 one of his oldest friends made a public attack on Southey, and that friend the gentlest and sweet-natured of them all. In a *Quarterly* article Southey had spoken of the Essays of Elia as a book which wanted only a sounder religious feeling to be as delightful as it was original. He had intended to alter the expression in the proof-sheet, but no proof-sheet was ever sent. Lamb, already pained by references to his writings in the *Quarterly*, some of which he erroneously ascribed to Southey, was deeply wounded. "He might have spared an old friend such a construction of a few careless flights that meant no harm to religion." A long expostulation addressed by Elia to Robert Southey, Esq., appeared in the *London Magazine* for October, only a portion of which is retained in the Elia Essays under the title of "The Tombs of the Abbey;" for though Lamb had playfully resented Coleridge's salutation, "my gentle-hearted Charles," his heart was indeed gentle, and could not endure the pain of its own wrath; among the memorials of the dead in Westminster he finds his right mind, his truer self, once more; he forgets the grave aspect with which Southey looked awful on his poor friend, and spends his indignation harmless as summer lightning over the heads of a Dean and Chapter. Southey, seeing the announcement of a letter addressed to him by Lamb, had expected a sheaf of friendly pleasantries; with surprise he learnt what pain his words had caused. He hastened to explain; had Lamb intimated his feelings in private, he would have tried, by a passage in the ensuing *Quarterly*, to efface the impression un-

happily created; he ended with a declaration of unchanged affection, and a proposal to call on Lamb. "On my part," Southey said, "there was not even a momentary feeling of anger;" he at once understood the love, the error, the soreness, and the repentance awaiting a being so composed of goodness as Elia. "Dear Southey"—runs the answer of Lamb—"the kindness of your note has melted away the mist that was upon me. I have been fighting against a shadow. . . . I wish both magazine and review were at the bottom of the sea. I shall be ashamed to see you, and my sister (though innocent) will be still more so, for this folly was done without her knowledge, and has made her uneasy ever since. My guardian angel was absent at the time. I will make up courage to see you, however, any day next week. We shall hope that you will bring Edith with you. That will be a second mortification; she will hate to see us; but come and heap embers; we deserve it, I for what I have done, and she for being my sister. Do come early in the day, by sunlight, that you may see my Milton. . . . Your penitent C. Lamb."

At Bristol, in 1808, Southey met for the first time the man of all others whom he most desired to see, the only man living, he says, "of whose praise I was ambitious, or whose censure would have humbled me." This was Walter Savage Landor. *Madoc*, on which Southey had built his hope of renown as a poet, had been published, and had been coldly received; *Kehama*, which had been begun, consequently now stood still. Their author could indeed, as he told Sir George Beaumont, be contented with posthumous fame, but it was impossible to be contented with posthumous bread and cheese. "St Cecilia herself could not have played the organ if there had been nobody to blow the bellows for her." At this moment, when he turned sadly and bravely from poetry to more profitable work, he first looked on Landor. "I never saw any one more unlike myself," he writes, "in every prominent part of human character, nor any one who so cordially and instinctively agreed with me on so many of the most important subjects. I have often said before we met, that I would walk forty miles to see him, and having seen him, I would gladly walk fourscore to see him again. He talked of *Thalaba*, and I told him of the series of mythological poems which I had planned, . . . and also told him for what reason they had been laid aside; in plain English, that I could not afford to write them. Landor's reply was 'Go on with them, and I will pay for printing them, as many as you will write, and as many copies as you please.'" The princely offer stung Southey, as he says, to the very core; not that he thought of accepting that offer, but the generous words were themselves a deed, and claimed a return. He rose earlier each morning to carry on his *Kehama*, without abstracting time from better-paid task-work; it advanced, and duly as each section of this poem, and subsequently of his *Roderick*, came to be written, it was transcribed for the friend whose sympathy and admiration were a golden reward. To be praised by one's peers is indeed hap-

piness. Landor, liberal of applause, was keen in suggestion and exact in censure. Both friends were men of ardent feelings, though one had tamed himself, while the other never could be tamed; both often gave their feelings a vehement utterance. On many matters they thought, in the main, alike—on the grand style in human conduct, on the principles of the poetic art, on Spanish affairs, on Catholicism. The secret of Landor's high-poised dignity in verse had been discovered by Southey; he, like Landor, aimed at a classical purity of diction; he, like Landor, loved, as a shaper of imaginative forms, to embody in an act, or an incident, the virtue of some eminent moment of human passion, and to give it fixity by sculptured phrase; only the repression of a fiery spirit is more apparent in Landor's monumental lines than in Southey's. With certain organic resemblances, and much community of sentiment, there were large differences between the two, so that when they were drawn together in sympathy, each felt as if he had annexed a new province. Landor rejoiced that the first persons who shared his turret at Llanthony were Southey and his wife; again, in 1817, the two friends were together for three days at Como, after Southey had endured his prime affliction—the death of his son:—

> "Grief had swept over him; days darkened round;
> Bellagio, Valintelvi smiled in vain,
> And Monte Rosa from Helvetia far
> Advanced to meet us, wild in majesty
> Above the glittering crests of giant sons
> Station'd around . . . in vain too! all in vain."

Two years later the warm-hearted friend writes from Pistoia, rejoicing in Southey's joy: "Thank God! Tears came into my eyes on seeing that you were blessed with a son." To watch the happiness of children was Landor's highest delight; to share in such happiness was Southey's; and Arnold and Cuthbert formed a new bond between their fathers. In 1836, when Southey, in his sixty-third year, guided his son through the scenes of his boyhood, several delightful days were spent at Clifton with Landor. I never knew a man of brighter genius or of kinder heart, said Southey; and of Landor in earlier years:—"He does more than any of the gods of all my mythologies, for his very words are thunder and lightning—such is the power and splendour with which they burst out." Landor responded with a majestic enthusiasm about his friend, who seemed to him no less noble a man than admirable a writer:

> "No firmer breast than thine hath Heaven
> To poet, sage, or hero given:
> No heart more tender, none more just,
> To that He largely placed in trust:
> Therefore shalt thou, whatever date
> Of years be thine, with soul elate
> Rise up before the Eternal throne,
> And hear, in God's own voice, 'Well done!'"

That "Well done" greeted Southey many years before Landor's imperial head was laid low. In the last letter from his friend received by Southey—already the darkness was fast closing in—he writes, "If any man living is ardent for your welfare, I am; whose few and almost worthless merits your generous heart has always overvalued, and whose infinite and great faults it has been too ready to overlook. I will write to you often, now I learn that I may do it inoffensively; well remembering that among the names you have exalted is Walter Landor." Alas! to reply was now beyond the power of Southey; still, he held *Gebir* in his hands oftener than any other volume of poetry, and, while thought and feeling lived, fed upon its beauty. "It is very seldom now," Caroline Southey wrote at a later date, "that he ever names any person: but this morning, before he left his bed, I heard him repeating softly to himself, *Landor, ay, Landor.*"

"If it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all"—this was ever present to Southey during the happy days of labour and rest in Greta Hall. While he was disposing his books so as to make the comeliest show, and delighting in their goodly ranks; while he looked into the radiant faces of his children, and loved their innocent brightness, he yet knew that the day of detachment was approaching. There was nothing in such a thought which stirred Southey to a rebellious mood; had he not set his seal to the bond of life? How his heart rested in his home, only his own words can tell: even a journey to London seemed too long:—"Oh dear; oh dear! there is such a comfort in one's old coat and old shoes, one's own chair and own fireside, one's own writing-desk and own library—with a little girl climbing up to my neck, and saying, 'Don't go to London, papa—you must stay with Edith;' and a little boy, whom I have taught to speak the language of cats, dogs, cuckoos, and jackasses, etc., before he can articulate a word of his own;—there is such a comfort in all these things, that *transportation* to London for four or five weeks seems a heavier punishment than any sins of mine deserve." Nor did his spirit of boyish merriment abate until overwhelming sorrow weighed him down:—"I am quite as noisy as I ever was," he writes to Lightfoot, "and should take as much delight as ever in showering stones through the hole of the staircase against your room door, and hearing with what hearty good earnest 'you fool' was vociferated in indignation against me in return. Oh, dear Lightfoot, what a blessing it is to have a boy's heart! it is as a great blessing in carrying one through this world, as to have a child's spirit will be in fitting us for the next." But Southey's light-heartedness was rounded by a circle of earnest acquiescence in the law of mortal life; a clear-obscure of faith as pure and calm and grave as the heavens of a midsummer night. At thirty he writes:—"No man was ever more contented with his lot than I am, for few have had more enjoyment and none had ever better or worthier hopes. Life, therefore, is sufficiently dear to me, and long life desirable, that I may accomplish all which I design. But yet I could be well content that the

next century were over, and my part fairly at an end, having been gone well through. Just as at school one wished the school-days over, though we were happy enough there, because we expected more happiness and more liberty when we were to be our own masters, might lie as much later in the morning as we pleased, have no bounds and do no exercise—just so do I wish that my exercises were over." At thirty-five:—"Almost the only wish I ever gave utterance to is that the next hundred years were over. It is not that the uses of this world seem to me weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable—God knows far otherwise! No man can be better contented with his lot. My paths are paths of pleasantness. . . . Still, the instability of human happiness is ever before my eyes; I long for the certain and the permanent." "My notions about life are much the same as they are about travelling—there is a good deal of amusement on the road, but, after all, one wants be at rest." At forty:—"My disposition is invincibly cheerful, and this alone would make me a cheerful man if I were not so from the tenor of my life; yet I doubt whether the strictest Carthusian has the thought of death more habitually in his mind."

Such was Southey's constant temper: to some persons it may seem an unfortunate one; to some it may be practically unintelligible. But those who accept of the feast of life freely, who enter with a bounding foot its measures of beauty and of joy—glad to feel all the while the serviceable sackcloth next the skin—will recognise in Southey an instructed brother of the Renunciants' rule.

CHAPTER VI.

CHANGES AND EVENTS, 1803—1843.

In October, 1805, Southey started with his friend Elmsley for a short tour in Scotland. On their way northward they stopped three days at Ashestiel. There, in a small house, rising amid its old-fashioned garden, with pastoral hills all around, and the Tweed winding at the meadow's end, lived Walter Scott. It was the year in which old Border song had waked up, with ampler echoings, in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and Scott was already famous. Earlier in the year he had visited Grasmere, and had stood upon the summit of Helvellyn, with Wordsworth and Davy by his side. The three October days, with their still. misty brightness, went by in full enjoyment. Southey had brought with him a manuscript containing sundry metrical romances of the fifteenth century, on which his host pored, as far as courtesy and the hours allowed, with much delight; and the guests saw Melrose, that old romance in stone so dear to Scott, went salmon-spearing on the Tweed, dined on a hare snapped up before their eyes by Percy and Douglas. and visited Yarrow. From Ashestiel they proceeded to Edinburgh. Southey looked coldly on the grey metropolis; its new city seemed a kind of Puritan Bath, which worshipped propriety instead of pleasure; but the old town, seen amid the slant light of a wild, red sunset, impressed him much, its vast irregular outline of roofs and chimneys rising against tumultuous clouds like the dismantled fragments of a giant's palace. Southey was prepared to find himself and his friends of the Lakes persons of higher stature than the Scotch *literatuli*. Before accepting an invitation to meet him at supper, Jeffrey politely forwarded the proof of an unpublished review of *Madoc;* if the poet preferred that his reviewer should not present himself, Mr. Jeffrey would deny himself the pleasure of Mr. Southey's acquaintance. Southey was not to be daunted, and, as he tells it himself, felt nothing but good-humour on beholding a bright-faced homunculus of five-foot-one, the centre of an attentive circle, ēēnunciating with North-British ēēlocution his doctrines on taste. The lively little gentleman, who thought to crush *The Excursion*—he could as easily crush Skiddaw, said Southey—received from the author of *Madoc* a courtesy *de haut en bas* intended to bring home to his consciousness the fact that he was—but five-foot-one. The bland lips of the

gods who looked down on Auld Reekie that evening smiled ta the magnanimity alike of poet and critic.

Two years later (1807), differences having arisen between the proprietors and the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, it was in contemplation to alter the management, and Longman wrote requesting Southey to review him two or three articles "in his best manner." Southey did not keep firkins of criticism of first and second brand, but he was not unwilling to receive ten guineas a sheet instead of seven pounds. When, however, six months later, Scott urged his friend to contribute, Judge Jeffrey still sat on the bench of the *Edinburgh Review*, hanging, drawing, and quartering luckless poets with undiminished vivacity. It was of no use for Scott to assure Southey that the homunculus, notwithstanding his flippant attacks on *Madoc* and *Thalaba*, had the most sincere respect for their author and his talents. Setting all personal feelings aside, an irreconcilable difference, Southey declared, between Jeffrey and himself upon every great principle of taste, morality, and policy, occasioned a difficulty which could not be removed. Within less than twelve months Scott, alienated by the deepening Whiggery of the *Review*, and by more personal causes, had ceased to contribute, and opposite his name in the list of subscribers Constable had written, with indignant notes of exclamation, "*Stopt!!!*" John Murray, the young bookseller in Fleet Street, had been to Ashestiel; in "dern privacie" a bold complot was laid; why should the Edinburgh clique carry it before them? The spirit of England was still sound, and would respond to loyalty, patriotism, the good traditions of Church and State, the temper of gentlemen, courage, scholarship; Gifford, of the Anti-Jacobin, had surely a sturdier arm than Jeffrey; George Ellis would remember his swashing-blow; there were the Roses, and Matthias, and Heber; a rival *Review* should see the light, and that speedily; "a good plot, good friends, and full of expectation—an excellent plot, very good friends."

Southey was invited to write on Spanish affairs for the first number of the *Quarterly* (February, 1809). His political opinions had undergone a considerable alteration since the days of Pantisocracy and *Joan of Arc*. The Reign of Terror had not caused a violent reaction against the doctrine of a Republic, nor did he soon cease to sympathise with France. But his hopes were dashed; it was plain that "the millennium would not come this bout." Man as he is appeared more greedy, ignorant, and dangerous than he had appeared before, though man as he may be was still a being composed of knowledge, virtue, and love. The ideal republic receded into the dimness of unborn time; no doubt—so Southey maintained to the end—a republic is the best form of government in itself, as a sun-dial is simpler and surer than a time-piece; but the sun of reason does not always shine, and therefore complicated systems of government, containing checks and counter-checks, are needful in old countries for the present; better systems are no doubt conceivable—for better men. "Mr. Southey's mind," wrote

Hazlitt, "is essentially sanguine, even to overweeningness. It is prophetic of good; it cordially embraces it; it casts a longing, lingering look after it, even when it is gone for ever. He cannot bear to give up the thought of happiness, his confidence in his fellow-men, when all else despair. It is the very element 'where he must live or have no life at all.'" This is true; we sacrifice too much to prudence—Southey said, when not far from sixty—and in fear of incurring the danger or the reproach of enthusiasm, too often we stifle the holiest impulses of the understanding and the heart. Still, at sixty he believed in a state of society actually to be realised as superior to English society in the nineteenth century, as that itself is superior to the condition of the tattooed Britons, or of the Northern Pirates from whom we have descended. But the error of supposing such a state of society too near, of fancying that there is a short road to it, seemed to him a pernicious error, seducing the young and generous into an alliance with whatever is flagitious and detestable.

It was not until the Peace of Amiens (1802) that Southey was restored in feeling to his own country. From that hour the new departure in his politics may be said to date. The honour of England became as dear to him as to her most patriotic son; and in the man who had subjugated the Swiss Republic, and thrown into a dungeon the champion of Negro independence, and slaughtered his prisoners at Jaffa, he indignantly refused to recognize the representative of the generous principles of 1789. To him, as to Wordsworth, the very life of virtue in mankind seemed to dwell in the struggle against the military despotism which threatened to overwhelm the whole civilised world. Whatever went along with a spirited war-policy Southey could accept. It appeared to himself that his views and hopes had changed precisely because the heart and soul of his wishes had continued the same. To remove the obstacles which retard the improvement of mankind was the one object to which, first and last, he gave his most earnest vows. "This has been the pole-star of my course; the needle has shifted according to the movements of the state vessel wherein I am embarked, but the direction to which it points has always been the same. I did not fall into the error of those who, having been the friends of France when they imagined that the cause of liberty was implicated in her success, transferred their attachment from the Republic to the Military Tyranny in which it ended, and regarded with complacency the progress of oppression because France was the oppressor. 'They had turned their faces toward the East in the morning to worship the rising sun, and in the evening they were looking eastward, obstinately affirming that still the sun was there.' I, on the contrary, altered my position as the world went round."*

Wordsworth has described in memorable words the sudden exaltation of the spirit of resistance to Napoleon, its change from the temper of fortitude to enthusiasm, animated by hope, when the

* The words quoted by Southey are his own, written in 1809.

Spanish people rose against their oppressors. "From that moment," he says, "this corruptible put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality." Southey had learned to love the people of the Peninsula; he had almost naturalised himself among them by his studies of Spanish and Portuguese history and literature. Now there was in him a new birth of passion at a period of life when ordinarily the crust of custom begins to encase our free spirits. All his moral ardour flowed in the same current with his political enthusiasm; in this war there was as direct a contest between the principles of evil and good as the elder Persians or the Manicheans imagined in their fables. "Since the stirring day of the French Revolution," he writes to John May, "I have never felt half so much excitement in political events as the present state of Spain has given me." Little as he liked to leave home, if the Spaniards would bury their crown and sceptre, he would gird up his loins and assist at the ceremony, devout as ever pilgrim at Compostella. A federal republic which should unite the Peninsula, and allow the internal governments to remain distinct, was what Southey ardently desired. When news came of the Convention of Cintra (1808), the poet, ordinarily so punctual a sleeper, lay awake all night; since the execution of the Brissotines no public event distressed him so deeply. "How gravely and earnestly used Samuel Taylor Coleridge"—so writes Coleridge's daughter—"and William Wordsworth and my uncle Southey also, to discuss the affairs of the nation, as if it all came home to their business and bosoms, as if it were their private concern! Men do not canvass these matters now-a-days, I think, quite in the same tone."

That faith in the ultimate triumph of good which sustains Southey's heroine against the persecution of the Almighty Rajah, sustained Southey himself during the long struggle with Napoleon. A military despotism youthful and full of vigour, he said, must beat down corrupt establishments and worn-out governments; but how can it beat down for ever a true love of liberty and a true spirit of patriotism? When at last tidings reached Keswick that the Allies were in Paris, Southey's feelings were such as he had never experienced before. "The curtain had fallen after a tragedy of five-and-twenty years." The hopes, and the ardours, and the errors, and the struggles of his early life crowded upon his mind; all things seemed to have worked together for good. He rejoiced that the whirlwind of revolution had cleared away the pestilence of the old governments; he rejoiced that right had conquered might. He did not wish to see the bad Bourbon race restored, except to complete Bonaparte's overthrow. And he feared lest an evil peace should be made. Paris taken, a commanding intellect might have cast Europe into whatever mould it pleased. "The first business," says Southey, with remarkable provision, "should have been to have reduced France to what she was before Louis XIV.'s time; the second, to have created a great power in the North of Germany, with Prussia at its head; the third, to have consolidated Italy into one kingdom or commonwealth."

The politicians of the *Edinburgh Review* had predicted ruin for all who dared to oppose the Corsican; they ridiculed the romantic hopes of the English nation; the fate of Spain, they delared in 1810, was decided; it would be cruel, they said, to foment petty insurrections; France had conquered Europe. It was this policy of despair which roused Scott and Southey. "We shall hoist the bloody flag," writes the latter, "down alongside that Scotch ship, and engage her yard-arm to yard-arm." But at first Southey, by his own request, was put upon other work than that of firing off the heavy *Quarterly* guns. Probably no man in England had read so many books of travel; these he could review better, he believed, than anything else; biography and history were also within his reach; with English poetry, from Spenser onwards, his acquaintance was wide and minute, but he took no pleasure in sitting in judgment on his contemporaries; his knowledge of the literary history of Spain and Portugal was a speciality, which, as often as the readers of the *Review* could bear with it, might be brought into use. Two things he could promise without fail—perfect sincerity in what he might write, without the slightest pretension of knowledge which he did not possess, and a punctuality not to be exceeded by Mr. Murray's opposite neighbour, the clock of St. Dunstan's.

Southey's essays—literary, biographical, historical, and miscellaneous—would probably now exist in a collected form, and constitute a storehouse of information—information often obtained with difficulty, and always conveyed in a lucid and happy style—were it not that he chose, on the eve of the Reform Bill, to earn whatever unpopularity he could by collecting his essays on political and social subjects. Affairs had hurried forward with eager strides; these *Quarterly* articles seemed already far behind, and might safely be left to take a quiet corner in Time's wallet among the alms for oblivion. Yet Southey's political articles had been effective in their day, and have still a value by no means wholly antiquarian. His home politics had been, in the main, determined by his convictions on the great European questions. There was a party of revolution in this country eager to break with the past, ready to venture every experiment for a future of mere surmise. Southey believed that the moral sense of the English people, their regard for conduct, would do much to preserve them from lawless excess; still, the lesson read by recent history was that order once overthrown, anarchy follows, to be itself quelled by the lordship of the sword. Rights, however, were pleaded—shall we refuse to any man the rights of a man? "Therapeutics," says Southey, "were in a miserable state as long as practitioners proceeded upon the gratuitous theory of elementary complexions; . . . natural philosophy was no better; being a mere farrago of romance, founded upon idle tales or fanciful conjectures, not upon observation and experiment. The science of politics is just now in the same stage: it has been erected by shallow sophists upon abstract right and imaginary compacts, without the slightest reference to habits and

history." "Order and improvement" were the words inscribed on Southey's banner. Order, that England might not fall, as France had fallen, into the hands of a military saviour of society; order, that she might be in a condition to wage her great feud on behalf of freedom with undivided energy. Order, therefore, first; not by repression alone—though there were a time and a place for repression also—but order with improvement as a portion of its very life and being. Southey was a poet and a moralist, and judged of the well-being of a people by other than material standards; the wealth of nations seemed to him something other and higher than can be ascertained by wages and prices, rent and revenue, exports and imports. "True it is," he writes, "the ground is more highly cultivated, the crooked hedge-rows have been thrown down, the fields are in better shape and of handsomer dimensions, the plough makes longer furrows, there is more corn and fewer weeds; but look at the noblest produce of the earth—look at the children of the soil, look at the seeds which are sown here for immortality!" "The system which produces the happiest moral effects will be found the most beneficial to the interest of the individual and the general weal; upon this basis the science of political economy will rest at last, when the ponderous volumes with which it has been overlaid shall have sunk by their own weight into the dead sea of oblivion." Looking about him, he asked, What do the English people chiefly need? More wealth? It may be so; but rather wisdom to use the wealth they have. More votes? Yes, hereafter; but first the light of knowledge, that men may see how to use a vote. Even the visible beauty and grace of life seemed to Southey a precious thing, the loss of which might be set over against some gain in pounds, shillings, and pence. The bleak walls and barrack-like windows of a manufactory, the long, unlovely row of operatives' dwellings, struck a chill into his heart. He contrasts the old cottages substantially built of native stone, mellowed by time, taken by nature to herself with a mother's fondness, the rose-bushes beside the door, the little patch of flower-garden—he contrasts these with the bald deformities in which the hands of a great mill are stalled.

Before all else, national education appeared to Southey to be the need of England. He saw a great population growing up with eager appetites, and consciousness of augmented power. Whence were moral thoughtfulness and self-restraint to come? Not, surely, from the triumph of liberal opinions; not from the power to read every incentive to vice and sedition: nor from Religious Tract Societies; nor from the portentous bibliolatry of the Evangelical party. But there is an education which at once enlightens the understanding and trains the conscience and the will. And there is that great association for making men good—the Church of England. Connect the two—education and the Church: the progress of enlightenment, virtue, and piety, however gradual, will be sure. Subordinate to this primary measure of reform, national education, many other measures were advocated by Southey.

He looked forward to a time when, the great struggle respecting property over—for this struggle he saw looming not far off—public opinion will no more tolerate the extreme of poverty in a large class of the people than it now tolerates slavery in Europe; when the aggregation of land in the hands of great owners must cease, when that community of land, which Owen of Lanark would too soon anticipate, might actually be realised. But these things were, perhaps, far off. Meanwhile how to bring nearer the golden age? Southey's son has made out a long list of the measures urged upon the English people in the *Quarterly Review*, or elsewhere, by his father. Bearing in mind that the proposer of these measures resisted the Reform Bill, Free Trade, and Catholic Emancipation, any one curious in such things may determine with what political label he should be designated:—National education; the diffusion of cheap and good literature; a well-organised system of colonisation, and especially of female emigration;* a wholesome training for the children of misery and vice in great cities; the establishment of Protestant sisters of charity, and a better order of hospital nurses; the establishment of savings-banks in all small towns; the abolition of flogging in the army and navy, except in extreme cases; improvements in the poor-laws; alterations in the game-laws; alterations in the criminal laws, as inflicting the punishment of death in far too many cases: execution of criminals within prison walls; alterations in the factory system for the benefit of the operative, and especially as to the employment of children; national works—reproductive if possible—to be undertaken in times of peculiar distress; the necessity of doing away with interments in crowded cities; the system of giving allotments of ground to labourers; the employment of paupers in cultivating waste lands; the commutation of tithes; and last, the need for more clergymen, more colleges, more courts of law.

"Mr. Southey," said Hazlitt, "missed his way in Utopia; he has found it at old Sarum." To one of Southey's temper old Sarum seemed good, with its ordered freedom, its serious aspiration, its habitual pieties, its reasonable service, its reverent history, its beauty of holiness, its close where priests who are husbands and fathers live out their calm, benignant lives—its amiable home for those whose toil is ended, and who now sleep well. But how Southey found his way from his early deism to Anglican orthodoxy cannot be precisely determined. Certainly not for many years could he have made that subscription to the Articles of the Church of England, which at the first barred his way to taking orders. The superstition, which seemed to be the chief spiritual food of Spain, had left Southey, for the rest of his life, a resolute opponent of Catholicism; and as he read lives of the Saints and histories of the Orders, the exclamation, "I do well to be angry," was

* "With the Cape and New Holland I would proceed thus:—'Govern yourselves, and we will protect you as long as you need protection; when that is no longer necessary, remember that though we be different countries, each independent, we are one people.'"—R. S. to W. S. Landor. Letters, vol. ii. p. 263.

often on his lips. For the wisdom, learning, and devotion of the Jesuits he had, however. a just respect. Geneva, with its grim logic and stark spirituality, suited nerves of a different temper from his. For a time Southey thought himself half a Quaker, but he desired more visible beauty and more historical charm than he could find in Quakerism. Needing a comely home for his spiritual affections, he found precisely what pleased him built in the pleasant Anglican close. With growing loyalty to the State, his loyalty to the Church could not but keep pace. He loved her tolerance, her culture; he fed upon her judicious and learned writers —Taylor, with his bright fancies like the little rings of the vine; South, hitting out straight from the shoulder at anarchy, fanaticism, and licentiousness, as Southey himself would have liked to hit; Jackson, whose weight of character made his pages precious as with golden bullion. After all, old Sarum had some advantages over Utopia.

The English Constitution consisting of Church and State, it seemed to Southey any absurdity in politics to give those persons power in the State whose duty it is to subvert the Church. Admit Catholics, he said, to every office of trust, emolument, or honour; only never admit them into Parliament. "The arguments about equal rights are fit only for a schoolboy's declamation: it may as well be said that the Jew has a right to be a bishop, or the Quaker an admiral, as that the Roman Catholic has a right to a seat in the British Legislature; his opinions disqualify him." To call this a question of toleration was impudence: Catholics were free to practise the rites of their religion; they had the full and free use of the press; perfect toleration was granted to the members of that church, which, wherever dominant, tolerates no other. Catholic Emancipation would not conciliate Ireland; the great source of Irish misery had been, not England's power, but her weakness, and those violences to which weakness resorts in self-defence; old sores were not to be healed by the admission of Catholic demagogues into Parliament. The measure styled Emancipation would assuredly be followed by the downfall of the Protestant Establishment in Ireland, and by the spread of Catholicism in English society. To Pyrrhonists one form of faith might seem as good or as bad as the other; but the great mass of the English people had not advanced so far in the march of intellect as to perceive no important difference between Catholic and Protestant doctrine. or between Catholic and Protestant morality. By every possible means, better the condition of the Irish peasantry; give them employment in public works; facilitate, for those who desire it, the means of emigration; extend the poor-laws to Ireland, and lay that impost on absentees in such a proportion as may compensate, in some degree, for their non-residence; educate the people; execute justice and maintain peace, and the cry of Catholic Emancipation may be safely disregarded.

So Southey pleaded in the *Quarterly Review*. With reference to Emancipation and to the Reform Bill, he and Wordsworth —

who, perhaps, had not kept themselves sufficiently in relation with living men and the public sentiment of the day—were in their solitude gifted with a measure of the prophetic spirit, which in some degree explains their alarms. For the prophet who knows little of expediency and nothing of the manipulation of parties, nothing of the tangled skein of contending interests, sees the future in its moral causes, and he sees it in a vision. But he cannot date the appearances in his vision. Battle, and garments rolled in blood, and trouble, and dimness of anguish pass before him, and he proclaims what it is given him to see. It matters not a little, however, in the actual event, whether the battle be on the morrow or half a century hence; and the prophet furnishes us with no chronology, or at best with some vague time and times and half a time. New forces have arisen before the terrors of his prediction come to pass, and therefore, when they come to pass, their effect is often altogether different from that anticipated. Wordsworth and Southey were right in declaring that a vast and formidable change was taking place in the England of their day: many things which they, amid incredulous scoffs, announced, have become actual; others remain to be fulfilled. But the events have taken up their place in an order of things foreign to the conceptions of the prophets; the fire from heaven descends, but meanwhile we, ingenious sons of men, have set up a lightning-conductor.

Southey and the *Quarterly Review* were often spoken of as a single entity. But the *Review*, in truth, never precisely represented his feelings and convictions. With Gifford he had no literary sympathies. Gifford's heart was full of kindness, says Southey, for all living creatures except authors; *them* he regarded as Isaac Walton did the worm. Against the indulgence of that temper Southey always protested; yet he was chosen to bear the reproach of having tortured Keats, and of having anonymously glorified himself at the expense of Shelley. Gifford's omissions, additions, substitutions, often caused Southey's article in the *Review* to be very unlike the article which he had despatched to the editor in manuscript. Probably these changes were often made on warrantable grounds. Southey's confidence in his own opinions, which always seemed to him to be based upon moral principles, was high; and he was not in the habit of diluting his ink. Phrases which sounded well in the library of Greta Hall had quite another sound in Mr. Murray's office in Fleet Street.

On arriving in London for a short visit in the autumn of 1813, Southey learnt that the Prince Regent wished to confer on him the Laureateship, vacant by the death of Pye. Without consulting the Regent, Lord Liverpool had previously directed that the office should be offered to Walter Scott. On the moment came a letter from Scott informing Southey that he had declined the appointment, not from any foolish prejudice against holding it, but because he was already provided for, and would not engross emoluments which ought to be awarded to a man of letters who had no other views in life. Southey hesitated, having ceased for several

years to produce occasional verses; but his friend Croker assured him that he would not be compelled to write odes as boys write exercises at stated times on stated subjects; that it would suffice if he wrote on great public events, or did not write, as the spirit moved him; and thus his scruples were overcome. In a little, low, dark room in the purlieus of St. James'—a solitary clerk being witness—the oath was duly administered by a fat old gentleman-usher in full buckle, Robert Southey swearing to be a faithful servant to the King, to reveal all treasons which might come to his knowledge, and to obey the Lord Chamberlain in all matters of the King's service. It was Scott's belief that his generosity had provided for his poorer brother bard an income of three or four hundred pounds a year. In reality the emolument was smaller and the task-work more irksome than had been supposed. The tierce of Canary, swilled by Ben Jonson and his poetic sons, had been wickedly commuted for a small sum; the whole net income amounted to 90*l.* But this, "the very least of Providence's mercies," as a poor clergyman said when pronouncing grace over a herring, secured an important happiness for Southey: he did not employ it, as Byron puts it, to butter his bread on both sides; he added twelve pounds to it, and vested it forthwith in an insurance upon his own life. "I have never felt any painful anxiety about providing for my family, . . ." he writes to Scott; "but it is with the deepest feeling of thanksgiving that I have secured this legacy for my wife and children, and it is to you that I am primarily and chiefly indebted."

Croker's assurance was too hastily given. The birthday Ode, indeed, fell into abeyance during the long malady of George III.; but the New-Year's Ode had still to be provided. Southey was fortunate in 1814; events worthy of celebration had taken place; a dithyramb, or rather an oration in lines of irregular length, was accordingly produced, and was forwarded to his musical yoke-fellow, Sir William Parsons. But the sight of Southey's page, over which the longs and shorts meandered seemingly at their own sweet will, shocked the orderly mind of the chief musician. What kind of ear could Mr. Southey have? His predecessor, the lamented Mr. Pye, had written his Odes always in regular stanzas. What kind of action was this exhibited by the unbroken State Pegasus? Duly as each New Year approached, Southey set himself to what he called his *ode*ous job; it was the price he paid for the future comfort of his children. While his political assailants pictured the author of *Joan of Arc* as a court-lacquey following in the train of the fat Adonis, he, with grim cheerfulness, was earning a provision for his girls; and had it not been a duty to kiss hands on the appointment, His Royal Highness the Prince Regent would never have seen his poet. Gradually the New-Year's Ode ceased to be looked for, and Southey was emancipated. His verse-making as laureate occasionally rose into something higher than journeyman work: when public events stirred his heart to joy, or grief, or indignation, he wrote many admirable periods of

measured rhetoric. *The Funeral Song for the Princess Charlotte* is of a higher strain; a knell, heavy yet clear-toned, is tolled by its finely wrought octosyllabics.

A few months after the battle of Waterloo, which had so deeply moved Southey, he started with his wife, a rare voyager from Keswick, and his little daughter Edith May, on a pilgrimage to the scene of victory. The aunts remained to take care of Bertha, Kate, and Isabel, with the nine-years-old darling of all, the only boy, Herbert. With Bruges, "like a city of Elizabeth's age—you expect to see a head with a ruff looking from the window," Southey was beyond measure delighted. At Ghent he ransacked bookshops, and was pleased to see in the Beguinage the realisation of his own and Rickman's ideas on Sisterhoods. On a clear September day the travellers visited the battlefield; the autumnal sunshine with soft airs, and now and again a falling leaf, while the bees were busy with the year's last flowers, suited well with the poet's mood of thankfulness, tempered by solemn thought. When, early in December, they returned with a lading of toys to their beloved lake-country, little Edith had hardly recovered from an illness which had attacked her at Aix. It was seven o'clock in the evening by the time they reached Rydal, and to press forward and arrive while the children were asleep would be to defraud everyone of the first reward earned by so long absence. "A return home under fortunate circumstances has something of the character of a triumph, and requires daylight." The glorious presence of Skiddaw, and Derwent bright under the wintry sky, asked also for a greeting at noon rather than at night. A depth of grave and tender thankfulness lay below Southey's joy that morning; it was twelve years since he had pitched his tent here beside the Greta; twelve years had made him feel the touch of time; but what blessings they had brought! all his heart's desire was here—books, children, leisure, and a peace that passeth understanding. The instant hour, however, was not for meditation but for triumph:—

"O joyful hour, when to our longing home
  The long-expected wheels at length drew nigh!
When the first sound went forth, 'they come! they come!'
  And hope's impatience quicken'd every eye!
'Never had man whom Heaven would heap with bliss
More glad return, more happy hour than this.'

"Aloft on yonder bench, with arms dispread,
  My boy stood, shouting there his father's name,
Waving his hat around his happy head;
  And there a younger group his sisters came:
Smiling they stood with looks of pleased surprise
While tears of joy were seen in elder eyes.

"Soon all and each came crowding round to share
  The cordial greeting, the beloved sight;
What welcomings of hand and lip were there!
  And when those overflowings of delight

Subsided to a sense of quiet bliss,
Life hath no purer, deeper happiness.

"The young companion of our weary way
Found here the end desired of all her ills;
She who in sickness pining many a day
Hunger'd and thirsted for her native hills,
Forgetful now of suffering past and pain,
Rejoiced to see her own dear home again.

"Recovered now the homesick mountaineer
Sate by the playmate of her infancy,
The twin-like comrade.*—render'd doubly dear
For that long absence; full of life was she
With voluble discourse and eager mien
Telling of all the wonders she had seen.

"Here silently between her parents stood
My dark-eyed Bertha, timid as a dove;
And gently oft from time to time she woo'd
Pressure of hand, or word, or look of love,
With impulse shy of bashful tenderness,
Soliciting again the wished caress.

"The younger twain in wonder lost were they,
My gentle Kate and my sweet Isabel:
Long of our promised coming, day by day,
It had been their delight to hear and tell;
And now when that long promised hour was come,
Surprise and wakening memory held them dumb.

* * * * * *

"Soon they grew blithe as they were wont to be;
Her old endearments each began to seek;
And Isabel drew near to climb my knee,
And pat with fondling hand her father's cheek;
With voice and touch and look reviving thus
The feelings which had slept in long disuse.

"But there stood one whose heart could entertain
And comprehend the fulness of the joy;
The father, teacher, playmate, was again
Come to his only and his studious boy;
And he beheld again that mother's eye
Which with such ceaseless care had watched his infancy.

"Bring forth the treasure now—a proud display—
For rich as Eastern merchants we return!
Behold the black Beguine, the Sister grey,
The Friars whose heads with sober motion turn,
The Ark well filled with all its numerous hives,
Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japhet, and their wives.

* Sara Coleridge.

"The tumbler loose of limb; the wrestlers twain;
And many a toy beside of quaint device,
Which, when his fleecy flocks no more can gain
Their pasture on the mountains hoar with ice,
The German shepherd carves with curious knife,
Earning in easy toil the food of frugal life.

"It was a group which Richter, had he viewed,
Might have deemed worthy of his perfect skill·
The keen impatience of the younger brood,
Their eager eyes and fingers never still;
The hope, the wonder, and the restless joy
Of those glad girls and that vociferous boy.

"The aged friend * serene with quiet smile,
Who in their pleasure finds her own delight;
The mother's heart-felt happiness the while;
The aunt's rejoicing in the joyful sight;
And he who in his gaiety of heart,
With glib and noisy tongue performed the showman's part."

It was manifest to a thoughtful observer, says De Quincey, that Southey's golden equanimity was bound up in a trinity of chords, a threefold chain—in a conscience clear of offence, in the recurring enjoyments from his honourable industry, and in the gratification of his parental affections. In the light of Herbert's smiles his father almost lived; the very pulses of his heart played in unison with the sound of his son's laughter. "There was," De Quincey goes on, "in his manner towards this child, and towards this only, something that marked an excess of delirious doating, perfectly unlike the ordinary chastened movement of Southey's affections; and something also which indicated a vague fear about him; a premature unhappiness, as if already the inaudible tread of calamity could be divined, as if already he had lost him." As a baby, while Edith was only "like an old book, ugly and good," Herbert, in spite of his Tartar eyes, a characteristic of Southey babyhood, was already beautiful. At six he was more gentle and more loving, says Southey, than you cain almost conceive. "He has just learnt his Greek alphabet, and is so desirous of learning, so attentive and so quick of apprehension, that, if it please God he should live, there is little doubt but that something will come out of him." In April, 1809, Southey writes to Landor, twenty-four hours after an attack of croup which seized his boy had been subdued: "Even now I am far, very far, from being at ease. There is a love which passeth the love of women, and which is more lightly alarmed than the lightest jealousy. Landor, I am not a Stoic at home; I feel as you do about the fall of an old tree! but, O Christ! what a pang it is to look upon the young shoot and think it will be cut down! And this is the thought which almost at all times haunts me; it comes upon me in moments when I know not whether the tears that start are of love or of bitterness."

* Mrs. Wilson—then aged seventy-two.

The alarm of 1809 passed away, and Herbert grew to the age of nine, active and bright of spirit, yet too pale, and, like his father, hanging too constantly over his books; a finely organised being, delicate in his sensibilities, and prematurely accomplished. Before the snow had melted which shone on Skiddaw that day when the children welcomed home their parents, Herbert Southey lay in his grave. His disease was an affection of the heart, and for weeks his father, palsied by apprehension, and unable to put hand to his regular work, stood by the bedside, with composed countenance, with words of hope, and agonised heart. Each day of trial made his boy more dear. With a trembling pride Southey saw the sufferer's behaviour, beautiful in this illness as in all his life; nothing could be more calm, more patient, more collected, more dutiful, more admirable. At last, worn with watching, Southey and his wife were prevailed upon to lie down. The good Mary Barker watched, and it is she who writes the following lines:—"Herbert!—that sweetest and most perfect of all children on this earth, who died in my arms at nine years of age, whose death I announced to his father and mother in their bed, where I had prayed and persuaded them to go. When Southey could speak, his first words were, '*The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!*' Never can I forget that moment" (1816).

"I am perfectly resigned," Southey wrote to Bedford on the most mournful of all days, "and do not give way to grief. Thank God I can control myself for the sake of others." But next morning found him weak as a child, even weaker in body than in mind, for long anxiety had worn him to the bone, and while he tried to calm and console the rest, his limbs trembled under him. His first wild wish to fly from Keswick passed away: it was good to be there near the boy's grave. Weak as he was, he flung himself upon his work. "I employ myself incessantly, taking, however, every day as much exercise as I can bear without injurious fatigue, which is not much." "It would surprise you were you to see what I get through in a day." "For the first week I did as much every day as would at other times have seemed the full and overflowing produce of three." From his early discipline in the stoical philosophy some help now was gained; from his active and elastic mind the gain was more; but these would have been insufficient to support him without a heart-felt and ever-present faith that what he had lost was not lost for ever. A great change had indeed come upon him. He set his house in order, and made arrangements as if his own death were at hand. He resolved not to be unhappy, but the joyousness of his disposition had received its death-wound; he felt as if he had passed at once from boyhood to the decline of life. He tried dutifully to make head against his depression, but at times with poor success. "I employ myself, and have recovered strength, but in point of spirits I rather lose ground." Still, there are hidden springs of comfort. "The head and flower of my earthly happiness is cut off. But I am *not* un-

happy." "When I give way to tears, which is only in darkness or solitude, they are not tears of unmingled pain." All beloved ones grew more precious; the noble fortitude of his wife made her more than ever a portion of his best self. His uncle's boy, Edward, he could not love more than he had loved him before; but, "as far as possible, he will be to me hereafter," writes Southey, "in the place of my son." And in truth the blessing of Herbert's boyhood remained with him still; a most happy, a most beautiful boyhood it had been; he was thankful for having possessed the child so long; "for worlds I would not but have been his father." "I have abundant blessings left; for each and all of these I am truly thankful; but of all the blessings which God has given me, this child, who is removed, is the one I *still* prize the most." To relieve feelings which he dared not utter with his lips, he thought of setting about a monument in verse for Herbert and himself, which might make one inseparable memory for father and son. A page or two of fragmentary thoughts in verse and prose for this poetic monument exists, but Southey could not keep his imagination enough above his heart to dare to go on with it; to do so would have dissolved his heart anew. One or two of these holy scriptures of woe, truly red drops of Southey's life-blood, will tell enough of this love passing the love of women.

"Thy life was a day; and sum it well, life is but a week of such days —with how much storm and cold and darkness! Thine was a sweet spring day—a vernal Sabbath, all sunshine, hope, and promise."

"And that name
In sacred silence buried, which was still
At morn and eve the never-wearying theme
Of dear discourse."

"Playful thoughts
Turned now to gall and esil."

"No more great attempts, only a few autumnal flowers like second primroses, etc."

"They who look for me in our Father's kingdom
Will look for him also; inseparably
Shall we be remembered."

"Come, then,
Pain and Infirmity—appointed guests,
My heart is ready."

From the day of his son's death Southey began to step down from the heights of life, with a steadfast foot, and head still held erect. He recovered cheerfulness, but it was as one who has undergone an amputation seeks the sunshine. Herbert's grave

anchored him in Keswick. An offer of 2000*l.* a year for a daily article in the *Times* did not tempt him to London. His home, his books, his literary work, Skiddaw, Derwentwater, and Crosthwaite churchyard were too dear. Three years later came the unlooked-for birth of a second boy; and Cuthbert was loved by his father; but the love was chastened and controlled of autumnal beauty and seriousness.

When the war with France had ended, depression of trade was acutely felt in England; party spirit ran high, and popular passions were dangerously roused. In the spring of 1817, the Laureate saw to his astonishment a poem entitled *Wat Tyler*, by Robert Southey, advertised as just published. He had written this lively dramatic sketch in the full fervour of Republicanism twenty-three years previously; the manuscript had passed into other hands, and he had long ceased to think of it. The skulking rogue and the knavish publisher who now gave it to the world had chosen their time judiciously; this rebuke to the apostate of the *Quarterly* would be a sweet morsel for gossip-mongers to roll under the tongue, an infallible pill to purge melancholy with all true children of progress. No fewer than sixty thousand copies, it is said, were sold. *Wat Tyler* suited well with Southey's nonage; it has a bright rhetorical fierceness of humanity. The speech-making radical blacksmith, "still toiling, yet still poor," his insulted daughter, her virtuous lover, the communist priest John Ball, whose amiable theology might be that of Mr. Belsham in his later days, stand over against the tyrant king, his Archiepiscopal absolver from oaths, the haughty nobles, and servile minions of the law. There was nothing in the poem that could be rememered with shame unless it is shameful to be generous and inexperienced at the age of twenty. But England in 1817 seemed charged with combustibles, and even so small a spark as this was not to be blown about without a care. The Prince Regent had been fired at; there were committals for treason; there were riots in Somersetshire; the swarm of Manchester Blanketeers announced a march to London; the Habeas Corpus was suspended; before the year was out, Brandreth and his fellows had been executed at Derby. Southey applied to the Court of Chancery for an injunction to restrain the publication of his poem. It was refused by Lord Eldon, on the ground that the publication being one calculated to do injury to society, the author could not reclaim his property in it. There the matter might have dropped; but it seemed good to Mr. William Smith, representing liberal Norwich, where Southey had many friends, to take his seat in the House of Commons one evening with the *Quarterly Review* in one pocket and *Wat Tyler* in the other, and to read aloud contrasted extracts showing how the malignant renegade could play the parts, as it suited him, of a seditious firebrand and a servile courtier. Wynn on the spot administered a well-deserved rebuke; Wilberforce wrote to Southey that, had he been present, his voice would also have been heard. Coleridge vindicated him in the *Courier*. Seldom, indeed, was Southey drawn into controversy.

When pelted with abuse, he walked on with unlifted head, and did not turn round; it seemed to him that he was of a stature to invite bespattering. His self-confidence was high and calm; that he possessed no common abilities, was certain; and the amount of toil which went into his books gave him a continual assurance of their worth which nothing could gainsay; he had no time for moods of dejection and self-distrust. But if Southey struck, he struck with force, and tried to leave his mark on his antagonist. To repel this attack make in the House of Commons, was a duty. *A letter to William Smith, Esq., M.P.*, was written, as Wordsworth wished, with the strength of masculine indignation; blow after blow is planted with sure effect; no word is wasted; there is skill in the hard hitting; and the antagonist fairly overthrown, Southey, with one glance of scorn, turns on his heel, and moves lightly away. "I wish you joy," wrote Walter Scott, "of your triumphant answer. . . . Enough of this gentleman, who I think will not walk out of the round again to slander the conduct of individuals." The concluding sentences of the Letter give in brief Southey's fearless review of his unstained career.

"How far the writings of Mr. Southey may be found to deserve a favourable acceptance from after-ages, time will decide; but a name which, whether worthily or not, has been conspicuous in the literary history of its age, will certainly not perish. . . .It will be related that he lived in the bosom of his family, in absolute retirement; that in all his writings there breathed the same abhorrence of oppression and immorality, the same spirit of devotion, and the same ardent wishes for the melioration of mankind; and that the only charge which malice could bring against him was, that as he grew older, his opinions altered concerning the means by which that melioration was to be effected, and that as he learnt to understand the institutions of his country, he learnt to appreciate them rightly, to love, and to revere, and to defend them. It will be said of him that in an age of personality he abstained from satire; and that during the course of his literary life, often as he was assailed, the only occasion on which he ever condescended to reply was when a certain Mr. William Smith insulted him in Parliament with the appellation of renegade. On that occasion, it will be said, he vindicated himself, as it became him to do, and treated his calumniator with just and memorable severity. Whether it shall be added that Mr. William Smith redeemed his own character by coming forward with honest manliness, and acknowledging but is not of the slightest importance to me."

One other personal strife is worthy of notice. When visiting London in 1813, he made the acquaintance of Byron. "Is Southey magnanimous?" Byron asked Rogers, remembering how he had tried his wit in early days on *Thalaba* and *Madoc*. Rogers could answer for Southey's magnanimity, and the two poets met, Southey finding in Byron very much more to like than he had expected, and Byron being greatly struck by Southey's "epic appearance." "To have that poet's head and shoulders," he said, "I would almost have written his Sapphics." And in his diary he wrote:—"Southey's talents are of the first order. His prose is perfect. . .

He has probably written too much of poetry for the present generation; posterity will probably select; but he has passages equal to anything." At a later date Byron thought Southey's *Roderick* "the first poem of the time." But when about to publish *Don Juan*, a work "too free for these very modest days," what better mode of saucily meeting public opinion, and getting a first laugh on his side, than to dedicate such a poem to a virtuous Laureate, and show that he and his fellows, who had uttered nothing base, were yet political turncoats, not entitled by any surperfine morality to assume airs of indignation against him and his reprobate hero? The dedication was shown about and laughed over, though not yet printed. Southey heard of these things, and felt released from that restraint of good feeling which made him deal tenderly in his writings with every one to whom he had once given his hand. An attack upon himself would not alone have roused Southey; no man received abuse with more self-possession. Political antagonism would still have left him able to meet a fellow-poet on the common ground of literature. When distress fastened upon Leigh Hunt, whose *Examiner* and *Liberal* had never spared the Laureate, Mr. Forster did not hesitate to apply to Southey for assistance, which was declined solely because the circular put forward Leigh Hunt's political services as those chiefly entitling him to relief. "Those who are acquainted with me," Southey wrote, "know that I am neither resentful nor intolerant;" and after expressing admiration of Leigh Hunt's powers, the letter goes on to suggest that his friends should draw up a circular in which, without compromising any of his opinions, the appeal might be made solely upon the score of literary merit, "placing him thus, as it were, within the sacred territory which ought always to be considered and respected as neutral ground." Wise and admirable words! But there was one offence which was to Southey the unforgivable sin against the holy spirit of a nation's literature. To entice poetry from the altar, and to degrade her for the pleasure of wanton imaginations, seemed to Southey, feeling as he did the sanctity of the love of husband and wife, of father and child, to be treason against humanity. Southey was, indeed, tolerant of a certain Rabelaisian freedom in playing with some of the enclosed incidents of our life. "All the greatest of poets," he says, "have had a spice of Pantagruelism in their composition, which I verily believe was essential to their greatness." But to take an extravagant fling in costume of a *sans-culotte*, and to play the part of "pander-general to the youth of Great Britain," were different things. In his preface to *A Vision of Judgment*, Southey deplored the recent fall in the ethical spirit of English literature, "which for half a century had been distinguished for its moral purity," and much of the guilt he laid on the leaders of "the Satanic School." In the long run the interest of art, as of all high endeavour, are invariably proved to be one with the interest of a nation's morality. It had taken many lives of men to lift literature out of the beast. From prudential virtue and the lighter ethics of Addison it had risen to the grave moral dignity of

Johnson, and from that to the impassionate spirituality of Wordsworth. Should all this be abandoned, and should literature now be permitted to reel back into the brute? We know that the title "Satanic School" struck home, that Byron was moved, and replied with brillant play of wit in his *Vision of Judgment*. The laughers went over to Byron's side. One who would be witty has certain advantages, if content to disregard honesty and good manners. To be witty was not Southey's concern. "I saw," he said, many years after, "that Byron was a man of quick impulses, strong passions, and great powers. I saw him abuse these powers; and, looking at the effect of his writings on the public mind, it was my duty to denounce such of them as aimed at the injury of morals and religion. This was all." If continental critics find in what he set down a characteristic example of the bourgeois morality of England, we note with interest their point of view.*

"Bertha, Kate, and Isabel," wrote Southey on June 26, 1820, "you have been very good girls, and have written me very nice letters, with which I was much pleased. This is the last letter which I can write in return; and as I happen to have a quiet hour to myself here at Streatham, on Monday noon, I will employ that hour in relating to you the whole history and manner of my being ell-ell-deed at Oxford by the Vice-Chancellor." Public distinctions of this kind he rated, perhaps, below their true value. To stand well with Murray and Longman was more to him than any handle to his name. A similar honour from Cambridge he declined. His gold medal from the Royal Society of Literature he changed for a silver coffee-pot for Mrs. Southey. To "be be-doctored and called everything that ends in issimus," was neither any harm nor much good; but to take his seat between such doctors as the Duke of Wellington, and—perhaps—Sir Walter Scott was a temptation. When his old school-fellow Phillimore presented Southey, the theatre rang with applause. Yet the day was, indeed, one of the heaviest in his life. Never had he stopped for a night in Oxford since he left it in 1794, intending to bid farewell to Europe for an Utopia in some back settlement of America. Not one who really loved him—for Scott could not appear—was present. When in the morning he went to look at Balliol, no one remembered him except old Adams, who had attempted to dress his hair as a freshman, and old Mrs. Adams, the laundress, both now infirm. From the tumultuous theatre Southey strolled into Christ Church walks alone. What changes time had made! Many of the friends with whom he had sauntered there were in their graves. So brooding, he chewed the bitter-sweet of remembrance, until at length a serious gratitude prevailed. "Little girls," the letter ends, "you know it might be proper for me now to wear a large wig, and to be called Doctor Southey, and to become very severe, and leave off being a comical papa. And if you should find that ell-ell-deeing has made this difference in me, you will not be surprised. However, I

* To certain false allegations of fact made by Byron, Southey replied in *The Courier* and reprinted his letters in *Essays, Moral and Political*, vol. ii. pp. 183–205.

shall not come down in my wig, neither shall I wear my robes at home."

While in Holland, in the summer of 1826, a more conspicuous honour was unexpectedly thrust upon Southey. The previous year he had gone abroad with Henry Taylor, and at Douay was bitten on the foot by Satan, according to his conjecture, sitting squat at his great toe; at Leyden he was obliged to rest his inflamed foot, and there it was his good fortune to be received into the house of the poet Bilderdijk, a delightful old erudite and enthusiast, whose charming wife was the translator of *Roderick*. In 1826 he visited his kind friends once more, and at Brussels received the surprising intelligence that during his absence he had been elected a member of Parliament. Lord Radnor, an entire stranger, had read with admiration Southey's confession of faith concerning Church and State, in the last paragraph of his *Book of the Church*. By his influence the poet had been elected for the borough of Downton: the return, however, was null, for Southey held a pension during pleasure; and even if this were resigned, where was the property qualification? This latter objection was met by Sir Robert Inglis, who desired to know whether Southey would sit in Parliament if an estate of 300*l.* a year were purchased for him. An estate of 300*l.* a year would be a very agreeable thing to Robert Lackland; but he had no mind to enter on a new public sphere for which he was ill qualified by his previous life, to risk the loss of health by midnight debates, to abandon the education of his little boy, and to separate himself more or less from his wife and daughters. He could not be wrong, he believed, in the quiet confidence which assured him that he was in his proper place.

Now more than ever before, Edith Southey needed her husband's sustaining love. On the day of his return to Keswick, while amused to find himself the object of mob popularity, he learnt that one of his daughters was ailing; the illness, however, already seemed to have passed the worst. This appearance of amendment quickly proved deceptive; and, on a Sunday evening in mid July, Isabel, "the most radiant creature that I ever beheld or shall behold," passed away, while her father was on his knees in the room below, praying that she might be released from suffering either by recovery or by death. All that had been gone through ten years before, renewed itself with dread exactness. Now, as then, the first day was one of stunned insensibility; now, as then, the next morning found him weak as a child, and striving in his weakness to comfort those who needed his support; now, as then, he turned to Grosvenor Bedford for a heart on which he might lay his own heart prone, letting his sorrow have its way. "Nothing that has assailed my character, or affected my worldly fortune, ever gave me an hour's vexation, or deprived me of an hour's rest. My happiness has been in my family, and there only was I vulnerable; that family is now divided between earth and heaven, and I must pray to remain with those who are left, so long as I can contribute to their welfare and comfort, rather than be gathered (as

otherwise I would fain be) to those who are gone." On that day of which the word Τετέλεσται is the record, the day on which the body of his bright Isabel was committed to earth, Southey wrote a letter to his three living daughters, copied with his own hand for each. It said what he could not bear to say of consolation and admonishment by word of mouth; it prepared them for the inevitable parting to come; it urged on them with measureless tenderness the duty of self-watchfulness, of guarding against little faults, of bearing and forbearing; it told them of his own grief to think that he should ever by a harsh or hasty word have given their dead sister even a momentary sorrow which might have been spared; it ended with the blessing of their afflicted father.

Sorrows of this kind, as Southey has truly said, come the heavier when they are repeated; under such strokes a courageous heart may turn coward. On Mrs. Southey a weight as of years had been laid; her spirits sank, her firmness gave way, a breath of danger shook her. Southey's way of bearing himself towards the dead is that saddest way—their names were never uttered; each one of the household had, as it were, a separate chamber in which the images of their dead ones lay, and each went in alone and veiled. The truth is, Southey had little native hardihood of temperament; self-control with him was painfully acquired. In solitude and darkness his tears flowed; when in his slumbers the images of the dead came to him, he could not choose but weep. Therefore, all the more among those whom he wished to lead into the cheerful ways of life, he had need to keep a guard upon his tenderness. He feared to preserve relics, and did not like to bear in mind birthdays, lest they should afterwards become too dangerously charged with remembrance and grief. "Look," he writes, "at some verses in the *Literary Souvenir*, p. 113; they are written by a dear friend of mine on the death of—you will know who"—for his pen would have trembled in tracing the name Isabel. And yet his habitual feelings with respect to those who had departed were not bitter; the dead were absent—that was all; he thought of them and of living friends at a distance with the same complacency, the same affection, only with more tenderness of the dead.

Greta Hall, once resounding with cheerful voices, had been growing silent. Herbert was gone; Isabel was gone. In 1829 Sara Coleridge went, a bride, tearful yet glad, her mother accompanying her, to distant London. Five years later, Edith May Southey became the wife of the Rev. John Warter. Her father fell back, even more than in former years, upon the never-failing friends of his library. It was in these darkening years that he sought relief in carrying out the idea, conceived long before, of a story which should be no story, but a specious receptacle for mingled wit and wisdom, experience and book-lore, wholesome nonsense and solemn meditation. *The Doctor*, begun in jest after merry talks with Grosvenor Bedford, grew more and more earnest as Southey proceeded. "He dreamt over it and brooded over it,

laid it aside for months and years, resumed it after long intervals, and more often, latterly, in thoughtfulness than in mirth, and fancied at last that he could put into it more of his mind than could conveniently be produced in any other form." The secret of its authorship was carefully kept. Southey amused himself somewhat laboriously with ascribing it now to this hand and now to that. When the first two volumes arrived, as if from the anonymous author, Southey thrust them away with well-assumed impatience, and the disdainful words, "Some novel, I suppose." Yet several of his friends had shrewd suspicions that the manuscript lay somewhere hidden in Greta Hall, and on receiving their copies wrote to thank the veritable donor; these thanks were forwarded by Southey, not without a smile in which something of irony mingled, to Theodore Hook, who was not pleased to enter into the jest. "I see in *The Doctor*," says its author, playing the part of an impartial critic, "a little of Rabelais, but not much; more of Tristram Shandy, somewhat of Burton, and perhaps more of Montaigne; but methinks the *quintum quid* predominates?" The *quintum quid* is that wisdom of the heart, that temper of loyal and cheerful acquiescence in the rule of life as appointed by a Divine Master, which characterises Southey.

For the third volume of *The Doctor*, in that chapter which tells of Leonard Bacon's sorrow for his Margaret, Southey wrote as follows:

"Leonard had looked for consolation, where, when sincerely sought, it is always to be found; and he had experienced that religion effects in a true believer all that philosophy professes, and more than all that mere philosophy can perform. The wounds which stoicism would cauterise, religion heals.

"There is a resignation with which, it may be feared, most of us deceive ourselves. To bear what must be borne, and submit to what cannot be resisted, is no more than what the unregenerate heart is taught by the instinct of animal nature. But to acquiesce in the afflictive dispensations of Providence—to make one's own will conform in all things to that of our Heavenly Father—to say to him in the sincerity of faith, when we drink of the bitter cup, 'Thy will be done!'—to bless the name of the Lord as much from the heart when he takes away as when he gives, and with a depth of feeling of which, perhaps, none but the afflicted heart is capable—this is the resignation which religion teaches, this is the sacrifice which it requires."

These words, written with no forefeeling, were the last put on paper before the great calamity burst upon Southey. "I have been parted from my wife," he tells Grosvenor Bedford on October 2, 1834, "by something worse than death. Forty years she has been the life of my life; and I have left her this day in a lunatic asylum."

Southey's union with his wife had been at the first one of love, and use and wont had make her a portion of his very being. Their provinces in the household had soon defined themselves. He in the library earned their means of support; all else might be left to

her with absolute confidence in her wise contrivance and quiet energy. Beneath the divided work in their respective provinces their lives ran on in deep and still accord. Now he felt for the first time shrunk into the limits of a solitary will. All that had grown out of the past was deranged by a central disturbance; no branch had been lopped away, but the main trunk was struck, and seared, and shaken to the roots. "Mine is a strong heart," Southey writes; "I will not say that the last week has been the most trying of my life; but I will say that the heart which could bear it can bear anything." Yet, when he once more set himself to work, a common observer, says his son, would have noticed little change in him, though to his family the change was great indeed. His most wretched hour was when he woke at dawn from broken slumbers; but a word of hope was enough to counteract the mischief of a night's unrest. No means were neglected which might serve to keep him in mental and bodily health; he walked in all weathers; he pursued his task-work diligently, yet not over-diligently; he collected materials for work of his choice. When, in the spring of 1835, it was found that the sufferer might return to wear out the body of this death in her own home, it was marvellous, declares Cuthbert Southey, how much of his old elasticity remained, and how, though no longer happy, he could be contented and cheerful, and take pleasure in the pleasures of others. He still could contribute something to his wife's comfort. Through the weary dream which was now her life she knew him, and took pleasure in his coming and going.

When Herbert died, Southey had to ask a friend to lend him money to tide over the short period of want which followed his weeks of enforced inaction. Happily now, for the first time in his life, his income was beforehand with his expenses. A bequest of some hundreds of pounds had come in; his *Naval Biographies* were paying him well; and during part of Mrs. Southey's illness he was earning a respectable sum, intended for his son's education, by his *Life of Cowper*—a work to which a painful interest was added by the study of mental alienation forced upon him in his own household. So the days passed, not altogether cheerlessly, in work if possible more arduous than ever. "One morning," writes his son, "shortly after the letters had arrived, he called me into his study. 'You will be surprised,' he said, 'to hear that Sir Robert Peel has recommended me to the King for the distinction of a baronetcy, and will probably feel some disappointment when I tell you that I shall not accept it.'" Accompanying Sir Robert Peel's official communication came a private letter asking in the kindest manner how he could be of use to Southey. "Will you tell me," he said, "without reserve, whether the possession of power puts within my reach the means of doing anything which can be serviceable or acceptable to you; and whether you will allow me to find some compensation for the many sacrifices which office imposes upon me, in the opportunity of marking my gratitude, as a public man, for the eminent services you have rendered, not

only to literature, but to the higher interests of virtue and religion?" Southey's answer stated simply what his circumstances were, showing how unbecoming and unwise it would be to accept the proffered honour; it told the friendly statesman of the provision made for his family—no inconsiderable one—in the event of his death; it went on to speak of his recent affliction; how this had sapped his former confidence in himself; how it had made him an old man, and forced upon him the reflection that a sudden stroke might deprive him of those faculties by which his family had hitherto been supported. "I could afford to die, but not to be disabled," he wrote in his first draft; but fearing that these words would look as if he wanted to trick out pathetically a plain statement, he removed them. Finally, if such an increase of his pension as would relieve him from anxiety on behalf of his family could form part of a plan for the encouragement of literature, it would satisfy all his desires. "Young as I then was," Cuthbert Southey writes, "I could not, without tears, hear him read with his deep and faltering voice, his wise refusal and touching expression of those feelings and fears he had never before given utterance to, to any of his own family." Two months later Sir Robert Peel signed a warrant adding 300*l.* annually to Southey's existing pension. He had resolved to recognize literary and scientific eminence as a national claim; the act was done upon public grounds, and Southey had the happiness of knowing that others beside himself would partake of the benefit.

"Our domestic prospects are darkening upon us daily," Southey wrote in July, 1835. "I know not whether the past or the present seems most like a dream to me, so great and strange is the difference. But yet a little while, and all will again be at the best." While Mrs. Southey lived, a daily demand was made upon his sympathies and solicitude which it was his happiness to fulfil. But from all except his wife he seemed already to be dropping away into a state of passive abstraction. Kate and Bertha silently ministered to his wants, laid the books he wanted in his way, replenished his ink-bottle, mended his pens, stirred the fire, and said nothing. A visit to the south-west of England in company with his son broke the long monotony of endurance. It was a happiness to meet Landor at Bristol, and Mrs. Bray at Tavistock, and Mrs. Bray's friend, the humble poet, Mary Colling, whose verses he had reviewed in the *Quarterly*. Yet to return to his sorrowful home was best of all; there is a leap up of the old spirits in a letter to his daughters announcing his approach. It is almost the last gleam of brightness. In the autumn of that year (1835) Edith Southey wasted away, growing weaker and weaker. The strong arm on which she had leaned for two-and-forty years supported her down stairs each day and bore her up again at evening. When the morning of November 16th broke, she passed quietly "from death unto life."

From that day Southey was an altered man. His spirits fell to a still lower range. For the first time he was conscious of the

distance which years had set between him and his children. Yet his physical strength was unbroken; nothing but snow deterred him from his walk; he could still circle the lake, or penetrate into Borrowdale on foot. But Echo, whom he had summoned to rejoice, was not roused by any call of his. Within-doors it was only by a certain violence to himself that he could speak. In the library he read aloud his proof-sheets alone; but for this he might almost have forgotten the sound of his own voice. Still, he was not wholly abandoned to grief; he looked back and saw that life had been good: its hardest moral discipline had served to train the heart: much still remained that was of worth—Cuthbert was quietly pursuing his Oxford studies; Bertha was about to be united in marriage to her cousin, Herbert Hill, son of that good uncle who had done so much to shape Southey's career. "If not hopeful," he writes, "I am more than contented, and disposed to welcome and entertain any good that may yet be in store for me, without any danger of being disappointed if there should be none." Hope of a sober kind indeed had come to him. For twenty years he had known Caroline Bowles; they had long been in constant correspondence; their acquaintance had matured into friendship. She was now in her fifty-second year; he in his sixty-fifth. It seemed to Southey natural that, without making any breach with his past life, he should accept her companionship in the nearest way possible, should give to her all he could of what remained, and save himself from that forlorn feeling which he feared might render old age miserable and useless.

But already the past had subdued Southey, and if any future lay before him it was a cloud lifeless and grey. In the autumn of 1838 he started for a short tour on the Continent with his old friend Senhouse, his son Cuthbert, John Kenyon, their master of the horse, Captain Jones, the Chamberlain, and Crabb Robinson, who was intendant and paid the bills. On the way from Boulogne they turned aside to visit Chinon, for Southey wished to stand on the spot where his first heroine, Joan of Arc, had recognised the French king. At Paris he roamed along the quays and hunted bookstalls. The change and excitement seemed to have served him; he talked freely and was cheerful. "Still," writes his son, "I could not fail to perceive a considerable change in him from the time we had last travelled together—all his movements were slower, he was subject to frequent fits of absence, and there was an indecision in his manner and an unsteadiness in his step which was wholly unusual with him." He often lost his way, even in the hotels; then laughed at his own mistakes, and yet was painfully conscious of his failing memory. His journal breaks off abruptly when not more than two-thirds of the tour had been accomplished. In February, 1839, his brother, Dr. Southey—ever a true comrade—describes him as working slowly and with an abstraction not usual to him; sometimes to write even a letter seemed an effort. In midsummer his marriage to Caroline Bowles took place, and with her he returned to Keswick in August. On the way home

his friends in London saw that he was much altered. "The animation and peculiar clearness of his mind," wrote Henry Taylor, "was quite gone, except a gleam or two now and then. . . . The appearance was that of a placid languor, sometimes approaching to torpor, but not otherwise than cheerful. He is thin and shrunk in person, and that extraordinary face of his has no longer the fire and strength it used to have, though the singular cast of the features and the habitual expressions make it still a most remarkable phenomenon." Still, his friends had not ceased to hope that tranquillity would restore mental tone, and he himself was planning the completion of great designs. "As soon as we are settled at Keswick, I shall resolutely begin upon the *History of Portugal*, as a duty which I owe to my uncle's memory. Half of the labour I consider as done. But I have long since found the advantage of doing more than one thing at a time, and the *History of the Monastic Orders* is the other thing to which I shall set to with hearty good-will. Both these are works of great pith and moment."

Alas! the current of these enterprises was already turned awry. In August it was not without an occasional uncertainty that he sustained conversation. "He lost himself for a moment; he was conscious of it, and an expression passed over his countenance which was very touching—an expression of pain and also of resignation. . . . The charm of his manner is perhaps even enhanced at present (at least when one knows the circumstances) by the gentleness and patience which pervade it." Before long the character of his handwriting, which had been so exquisite, was changed to something like the laboured scrawl of a child; then he ceased to write. Still he could read, and, even when he could no longer take in the meaning of what was before him, his eyes followed the lines of the printed pages. At last even this was beyond his power. He would walk slowly round his library, pleased with the presence of his cherished possessions, taking some volume down mechanically from the shelf. In 1840 Wordsworth went over to Greta Hall. "Southey did not recognise me," he writes, "till he was told. Then his eyes flashed for a moment with their former brightness, but he sank into the state in which I had found him, patting with both hands his books affectionately like a child." In the *Life of Cowper* he had spoken of the distress of one who suffers from mental disease as being that of a dream—"a dream, indeed, from which the sufferer can neither wake nor be awakened; but it pierces no deeper, and there seems to be the same dim consciousness of its unreality." So was it now with himself. Until near the end he retained considerable bodily strength; his snow-white hair grew darker; it was the spirit which had endured shattering strokes of fate, and which had spent itself in studying to be quiet.

After a short attack of fever, the end came on the 21st of March, 1843. Never was that "Well done!" the guerdon of the good and faithful servant, pronounced amid a deeper consent of those who attended and had ears to hear. On a dark and stormy

morning Southey's body was borne to the beautiful churchyard of Crosthwaite, towards which he had long looked affectionately as his place of rest. There lay his three children and she who was the life of his life. Skiddaw gloomed solemnly overhead. A grey-haired, venerable man who had crossed the hills stood there leaning on the arm of his son-in-law; these two, Wordsworth and Quillinan, were the only strangers present. As the words, "ashes to ashes," were uttered, a sudden gleam of sunshine touched the grave; the wind dropped, the rain was over, and the birds had begun their songs of spring. The mourners turned away thinking of a good man's life and death with peace—

"And calm of mind, all passion spent."

CHAPTER VII.

SOUTHEY'S WORK IN LITERATURE.

SOUTHEY'S career of authorship falls into two chief periods—a period during which poetry occupied the higher place and prose the lower, and a period during which this order was reversed. His translations of romantic fiction—*Amadis of Gaul*, *Palmerin of England*, and *The Cid*—connect the work of the earlier with that of the latter period, and serve to mark the progress of his mind from legend to history, and from the fantastic to the real. The poet in Southey died young, or, if he did not die, fell into a numbness and old age like that of which an earlier singer writes :—

> "Elde that in my spirit dulleth me,
> Hath of endyting all the subtilité
> Welnyghe bereft out of my remembraunce."

After thirty Southey seldom cared to utter himself in occasional verse. The uniformity of his life, the equable cheerfulness maintained by habits of regular work, his calm religious faith, his amiable Stoicism, left him without the material for lyrical poetry; and one so honest and healthy had no care to feign experiences of the heart which were not his. Still, he could apply himself to the treatment of large subjects with a calm, continuous energy; but as time went on his hand grew slack, and wrought with less ease. Scarcely had he overcome the narrative poet's chief difficulty, that of subduing varied materials to an unity of design, when he put aside verse, and found it more natural to be historian than poet.

The poetry of sober feeling is rare in lyrical verse. This may be found admirably rendered in some of Southey's shorter pieces. Although his temper was ardent and hopeful, his poems of pensive remembrance, of meditative calm, are perhaps the most characteristic. Among these his *Inscriptions* rank high. Some of those in memory of the dead are remarkable for their fine poise of feeling, all that is excessive and transitory having been subdued; for the tranquil depths of sorrow and of hope which lie beneath their clear, melodious words.

Southey's larger poetical works are fashioned of two materials which do not always entirely harmonise. First, material brought from his own moral nature; his admiration of something elevated

in the character of man or woman—generosity, gentleness, loyalty, fortitude, faith. And, secondly, material gathered from abroad; mediæval pomps of religion and circumstance of war; Arabian marvels, the work of the enchanters and the genii; the wild beauties and adventure of life amid New-World tribes; the monstrous mythology of the Brahman. With such material the poet's inventive talent deals freely, rearranges details or adds to them; still Southey is here rather a *finder* than a *maker*. His diligence in collecting and his skill in arranging were so great that it was well if the central theme did not disappear among manifold accessories. One who knows Southey, however, can recognise his ethical spirit in every poem. Thalaba, as he himself confessed, is a male Joan of Arc. Destiny or Providence has marked alike the hero and the heroine from mankind; the sheepfold of Domremi, and the palm-grove by old Moath's tent, alike nurture virgin purity and lofty aspiration. Thalaba, like Joan, goes forth a delegated servant of the highest to war against the powers of evil; Thalaba, like Joan, is sustained under the trials of the way by the sole talisman of faith. We are not left in doubt as to where Southey found his ideal. Mr. Barbauld thought *Joan of Arc* was modelled on the Socinian Christ. He was mistaken; Southey's ideal was native to his soul. "Early admiration, almost adoration of Leonidas; early principles of Stoicism derived from the habitual study of Epictetus, and the French Revolution at its height when I was just eighteen—by these my mind was moulded." And from these, absorbed into Southey's very being, came Thalaba and Joan.

The word *high-souled* takes possession of the mind as we think of Southey's heroic personages. Poetry, he held, ought rather to elevate than to affect—a Stoical doctrine transferred to art, which meant that his own poetry was derived more from admiration of great qualities than from sympathy with individual men or women. Neither the quick and passionate tenderness of Burns nor the stringent pathos of Wordsworth can be found in Southey's verse. No eye probably ever shed a tear over the misery of Ladurlad and his persecuted daughter. She, like the lady in *Comus* is set above our pity and perhaps our love. In *Kehama*, a work of Southey's mature years, the chivalric ardour of his earlier heroes is transformed into the sterner virtues of fortitude and an almost despairing constancy. The power of evil, as conceived by the poet, has grown more despotic; little can be achieved by the light-winged Glendoveer—a more radiant Thalaba—against the Rajah; only the lidless eye of Seeva can destroy that tyranny of lust and pride. *Roderick* marks a higher stage in the development of Southey's ethical ideal. Roderick, too, is a delegated champion of right against force and fraud; he, too, endures mighty pains. But he is neither such a combatant, pure and intrepid, as goes forth from the Arab tent, nor such a blameless martyr as Ladurlad. He is first a sinner enduring just punishment; then a stricken penitent; and from his shame and remorse he is at last uplifted by enthusiasm,

on behalf of his God and his people, into a warrior saint, the Gothic Maccabee.

Madoc stands somewhat away from the line of Southey's other narrative poems. Though, as Scott objected, the personages in *Madoc* are too nearly abstract types, Southey's ethical spirit dominates this poem less than any of the others. The narrative flows on more simply. The New-World portion tells a story full of picturesque incident, with the same skill and grace that belongs to Southey's best prose writings. Landor highly esteemed *Madoc*. Scott declared that he had read it three times since his first cursory perusal, and each time with increased admiration of the poetry. Fox was in the habit of reading aloud after supper to eleven o'clock, when it was the rule at St. Ann's Hill to retire; but while *Madoc* was in his hand, he read until after midnight. Those, however, who opened the bulky quarto were few: the tale was out of relation with the time; it interpreted no need, no aspiration, no passion of the dawn of the present century. And the mind of the time was not enough disengaged to concern itself deeply with the supposed adventures of a Welsh Prince of the twelfth century among the natives of America.

At heart, then, Southey's poems are in the main the outcome of his moral nature: this we recognise through all disguises—Mohammedan, Hindoo, or Catholic. He planned and partly wrote a poem—*Oliver Newman*—which should associate his characteristic ideal with Puritan principles and ways of life. The foreign material through which his ethical idea was set forth went far, with each poem, to determine its reception by the public. Coleridge has spoken of "the pastoral charm and wild, streaming lights of the *Thalaba*." Dewy night moon-mellowed, and the desert-circle girdled by the sky, the mystic palace of Shedad, the vernal brook, Oneiza's favourite kidling, the lamp-light shining rosy through the damsel's delicate fingers, the aged Arab in the tent-door—these came with a fresh charm into English narrative poetry eighty years ago. The landscape and the manners of Spain, as pictured in *Roderick*, are of marked grandeur and simplicity. In *Kehama*, Southey attempted a bolder experiment; and although the poem became popular, even a well-disposed reader may be allowed to sympathise with the dismay of Charles Lamb among the monstrous gods: "I never read books of travels, at least not farther than Paris or Rome. I can just endure Moors, because of their connexion as foes with Christians; but Abyssinians, Ethiops, Esquimaux, Dervises, and all that tribe I hate. I believe I fear them in some manner. A Mohammedan turban on the stage, though enveloping some well-known face,.... does not give me unalloyed pleasure. I am a Christian, Englishman, Londoner, Templar. God help me when I come to put off these snug relations, and to get abroad into the world to come."

Though his materials are often exotic, in style Southey aimed at the simplicity and strength of undefiled English. If to these melody was added, he had attained all he desired. To conversa-

of Trafalgar lies dead, his passion and pride find utterance :—"If the chariot and the horses of fire had been vouchsafed for Nelson's translation, he could scarcely have departed in a brighter blaze of glory." From Nelson on the quarter-deck of the *Victory*, to Cowper caressing his tame hares, the interval is wide; but Southey, the man of letters, lover of the fireside, and patron of cats, found it natural to sympathise with his brother poet. His sketches of literary history in the *Life of Cowper* are characteristic. The writer's range is wide, his judgment sound, his enjoyment of almost everything literary is lively; as critic he is kindly yet equitable. But the highest criticism is not his. Southey's vision was not sufficiently penetrative; he culls beauties, but he cannot pluck out the heart of a mystery.

His translations of romantic fiction, while faithful to their sources, aim less at literal exactitude than at giving the English reader the same pleasure which the Spaniard receives from the originals. From the destruction of Don Quixote's library Master Nicholas and the curate spared *Amadis of Gaul* and *Palmerin of England.* Second to Malory's grouping of the Arthur cycle *Amadis* may well take its place. Its chivalric spirit, its wildness, its tenderness and beauty, are carefully preserved by the translator. But Southey's chief gift in this kind to English readers is *The Cid.* The poem he supposed, indeed, to be a metrical chronicle instead of a metrical romance—no fatal error; weaving together the best of the poem, the ballads and the chronicle, he produced more than a mere compilation. "I know no work of the kind in our language," wrote Coleridge, "none which, uniting the charms of romance and history, keeps the imagination so constantly on the wing and yet leaves so much for after-reflection."

Of Southey's political writings something has been said in a former chapter. Among works which can be brought under no general head, one that pleased the public was *Espriella's Letters*, sketches of English landscape, life, and manners, by a supposed Spanish traveller. The letters, giving as they do a lively view of England at the beginning of the present century, still possess an interest. Apart from Southey's other works stands *The Doctor;* nowhere else can one find so much of his varied erudition, his genial spirits, his meditative wisdom. It asks for a leisurely reader content to ramble everywhere and no whither, and still pleased to take another turn because his companion has not yet come to an end of learning, mirth, or meditation. That the author of a book so characteristic was not instantly recognised, is strange. "The wit and humor of *The Doctor*," says Edgar Poe, a keen critic, "have seldom been equalled. We cannot think Southey wrote it." Gratitude is due to Dr. Daniel Dove from innumerable "good little women and men," who have been delighted with his story of *The Three Bears.* To know that he had added a classic to the nursery would have been the pride of Southey's heart. Wide eyes entranced and peals of young laughter still make a triumph for one whose spirit, grave with a man's wisdom, was pure as the spirit of a little child.

WORDSWORTH

BY

F. W. H. MYERS

"From worlds not quickened by the sun
A portion of the gift is won
An intermingling of Heaven's pomp is spread
On ground which British shepherds tread"

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WORDSWORTH.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND EDUCATION.—CAMBRIDGE.

I CANNOT, perhaps, more fitly begin this short biography than with some words in which its subject has expressed his own feelings as to the spirit in which such a task should be approached. "Silence," says Wordsworth, "is a privilege of the grave, a right of the departed: let him, therefore, who infringes that right by speaking publicly of, for, or against those who cannot speak for themselves, take heed that he opens not his mouth without a sufficient sanction. Only to philosophy enlightened by the affections does it belong justly to estimate the claims of the deceased, on the one hand, and of the present age and future generations, on the other, and to strike a balance between them. Such philosophy runs a risk of becoming extinct among us, if the coarse intrusions into the recesses, the gross breaches upon the sanctities, of domestic life, to which we have lately been more and more accustomed, are to be regarded as indications of a vigorous state of public feeling. The wise and good respect, as one of the noblest characteristics of Englishmen, that jealousy of familiar approach which, while it contributes to the maintenance of private dignity, is one of the most efficacious guardians of rational public freedom."

In accordance with these views the poet entrusted to his nephew, the present Bishop of Lincoln, the task of composing memoirs of his life, in the just confidence that nothing would by such hands be given to the world which was inconsistent with the dignity either of the living or of the dead. From those memoirs the facts contained in the present work have been for the most part drawn. It has, however, been my fortune, through hereditary friendships, to have access to many manuscript letters and much oral tradition bearing upon the poet's private life;* and some details and some passages of letters hitherto unpublished will appear in these pages. It would seem, however, that there is but little of public interest in

* I take this opportunity of thanking Mr. William Wordsworth, the son, and Mr. William Wordsworth, the grandson, of the poet, for help most valuable in enabling me to give a true impression of the poet's personality.

Wordsworth's life which has not already been given to the world, and I have shrunk from narrating such minor personal incidents as he would himself have thought it needless to dwell upon. I have endeavoured, in short, to write as though the Subject of this biography were himself its Auditor, listening, indeed, from some region where all of truth is discerned and nothing but truth desired, but checking by his venerable presence any such revelation as public advantage does not call for, and private delicacy would condemn.

As regards the critical remarks which these pages contain, I have only to say that I have carefully consulted such notices of the poet as his personal friends have left us, and also, I believe, nearly every criticism of importance which has appeared on his works. I find with pleasure that a considerable agreement of opinion exists —though less among professed poets or critics than among men of eminence in other departments of thought or action whose attention has been directed to Wordsworth's poems. And although I have felt it right to express in each case my own views with exactness, I have been able to feel that I am not obtruding on the reader any merely fanciful estimate in which better accredited judges would refuse to concur.

Without further preface I now begin my story of Wordsworth's life, in words which he himself dictated to his intended biographer. "I was born," he said, "at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, on April 7th, 1770, the second son of John Wordsworth, attorney-at-law—as lawyers of this class were then called—and law-agent to Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale. My mother was Anne, only daughter of William Cookson, mercer, of Penrith, and of Dorothy, born Crackanthorp, of the ancient family of that name, who from the times of Edward the Third had lived in Newbiggen Hall, Westmoreland. My grandfather was the first of the name of Wordsworth who came into Westmoreland, where he purchased the small estate of Sockbridge. He was descended from a family who had been settled at Peniston, in Yorkshire, near the sources of the Don, probably before the Norman Conquest. Their names appear on different occasions in all the transactions, personal and public, connected with that parish; and I possess, through the kindness of Colonel Beaumont, an almery, made in 1525, at the expense of a William Wordsworth, as is expressed in a Latin inscription carved upon it, which carries the pedigree of the family back four generations from him. The time of my infancy and early boyhood was passed partly at Cockermouth, and partly with my mother's parents at Penrith, where my mother, in the year 1778, died of a decline, brought on by a cold, in consequence of being put, at a friend's house in London, in what used to be called 'a best bedroom.' My father never recovered his usual cheerfulness of mind after this loss, and died when I was in my fourteenth year, a school-boy, just returned from Hawkshead, whither I had been sent with my elder brother Richard, in my ninth year.

"I remember my mother only in some few situations, one of which was her pinning a nosegay to my breast, when I was going to

catechism in the church, as was customary before Easter. An intimate friend of hers told me that she once said to her that the only one of her five children about whose future life she was anxious was William; and he, she said, would be remarkable, either for good or for evil. The cause of this was that I was of a stiff, moody, and violent temper; so much so that I remember going once into the attics of my grandfather's house at Penrith, upon some indignity having been put upon me, with an intention of destroying myself with one of the foils which I knew was kept there. I took the foil in hand, but my heart failed. Upon another occasion, while I was at my grandfather's house at Penrith, along with my eldest brother, Richard, we were whipping tops together in the large drawing-room, on which the carpet was only laid down upon particular occasions. The walls were hung round with family pictures, and I said to my brother, 'Dare you strike your whip through that old lady's petticoat?' He replied, 'No, I won't.' 'Then,' said I, 'here goes!' and I struck my lash through her hooped petticoat; for which, no doubt, though I have forgotten it, I was properly punished. But, possibly from some want of judgment in punishments inflicted, I had become perverse and obstinate in defying chastisement, and rather proud of it than otherwise.

"Of my earliest days at school I have little to say, but that they were very happy ones, chiefly because I was left at liberty then, and in the vacations, to read whatever books I liked. For example, I read all Fielding's works, *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, and any part of Swift that I liked—*Gulliver's Travels*, and the *Tale of a Tub*, being both much to my taste. It may be, perhaps, as well to mention that the first verses which I wrote were a task imposed by my master—the subject, *The Summer Vacation;* and of my own accord I added others upon *Return to School.* There was nothing remarkable in either poem; but I was called upon, among other scholars, to write verses upon the completion of the second centenary from the foundation of the school in 1585 by Archbishop Sandys. These verses were much admired—far more than they deserved, for they were but a tame imitation of Pope's versification, and a little in his style."

But it was not from exercises of this kind that Wordsworth's school-days drew their inspiration. No years of his life, perhaps, were richer in strong impressions; but they were impressions derived neither from books nor from companions, but from the majesty and loveliness of the scenes around him;—from Nature, his life-long mistress, loved with the first heats of youth. To her influence we shall again recur; it will be most convenient first to trace Wordsworth's progress through the curriculum of ordinary education.

It was due to the liberality of Wordsworth's two uncles, Richard Wordsworth and Christopher Crackanthorp (under whose care he and his brothers were placed at their father's death, in 1783), that his education was prolonged beyond his school-days.

For Sir James Lowther, afterwards Lord Lonsdale—whose agent Wordsworth's father, Mr. John Wordsworth, was—becoming aware that his agent had about 5000*l.* at the bank, and wishing, partly on political grounds, to make his power over him absolute, had forcibly borrowed this sum of him, and then refused to repay it. After Mr. John Wordsworth's death much of the remaining fortune which he left behind him was wasted in efforts to compel Lord Lonsdale to refund this sum; but it was never recovered till his death in 1801, when his successor repaid 8500*l.* to the Wordsworths, being a full acquittal, with interest, of the original debt. The fortunes of the Wordsworth family were, therefore, at a low ebb in 1787, and much credit is due to the uncles who discerned the talents of William and Christopher, and bestowed a Cambridge education on the future Poet Laureate, and the future Master of Trinity.

In October, 1787, then, Wordsworth went up as an undergraduate to St. John's College, Cambridge. The first court of this College, in the south-western corner of which were Wordsworth's rooms, is divided only by a narrow lane from the Chapel of Trinity College, and his first memories are of the Trinity clock, telling the hours "twice over, with a male and female voice," of the pealing organ, and of the prospect when

> "From my pillow looking forth, by light
> Of moon or favouring stars I could behold
> The antechapel, where the statue stood
> Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
> The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone."

For the most part, the recollections which Wordsworth brought away from Cambridge are such as had already found expression more than once in English literature; for it has been the fortune of that ancient University to receive in her bosom most of that long line of poets who form the peculiar glory of our English speech. Spenser, Ben Jonson, and Marlowe; Dryden, Cowley, and Waller; Milton, George Herbert, and Gray—to mention only the most familiar names—had owed allegiance to that mother who received Wordsworth now, and Coleridge and Byron immediately after him. "Not obvious, not obtrusive, she;" but yet her sober dignity has often seemed no unworthy setting for minds, like Wordsworth's, meditative without languor, and energies advancing without shock or storm. Never, perhaps, has the spirit of Cambridge been more truly caught than in Milton's *Penseroso;* for this poem obviously reflects the seat of learning which the poet had lately left, just as the *Allegro* depicts the cheerful rusticity of the Buckinghamshire village which was his new home. And thus the *Penseroso* was understood by Gray, who, in his *Installation Ode*, introduces Milton among the bards and sages who lean from heaven,

"To bless the place where, on their opening soul
First the genuine ardour stole."

"'Twas Milton struck the deep-toned shell," and invoked with the old affection the scenes which witnessed his best and early years:

"Ye brown o'er-arching groves,
That contemplation loves,
Where willowy Camus lingers with delight!
Oft at the blush of dawn
I trod your level lawn,
Oft wooed the gleam of Cynthia silver-bright
In cloisters dim, far from the haunts of Folly,
With Freedom by my side, and soft-eyed Melancholy."

And Wordsworth also "on the dry smooth-shaven green" paced on solitary evenings "to the far-off curfew's sound," beneath those groves of forest-trees among which "Philomel still deigns a song" and the spirit of contemplation lingers still; whether the silent avenues stand in the summer twilight filled with fragrance of the lime, or the long rows of chestnut engirdle the autumn river-lawns with walls of golden glow, or the tall elms cluster in garden or *Wilderness* into towering citadels of green. Beneath one exquisite ash-tree, wreathed with ivy, and hung in autumn with yellow tassels from every spray, Wordsworth used to linger long. "Scarcely Spenser's self," he tells us,

"Could have more tranquil visions in his youth,
Or could more bright appearances create
Of human forms with superhuman powers,
Than I beheld loitering on calm, clear nights
Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth."

And there was another element in Wordsworth's life at Cambridge more peculiarly his own—that exultation which a boy born among the mountains may feel when he perceives that the delight in the external world which the mountains have taught him has not perished by uprooting, nor waned for want of nourishment in field or fen; that even here, where nature is unadorned, and scenery, as it were, reduced to its elements—where the prospect is but the plain surface of the earth, stretched wide beneath an open heaven—even here he can still feel the early glow, can take delight in that broad and tranquil greenness, and in the august procession of the day.

"As if awakened, summoned, roused, constrained,
I looked for universal things; perused
The common countenance of earth and sky—
Earth, nowhere unembellished by some trace
Of that first Paradise whence man was driven;
And sky, whose beauty and bounty are expressed
By the proud name she bears—the name of Heaven."

Nor is it only in these open air scenes that Wordsworth has added to the long tradition a memory of his own. The "storied windows richly dight," which have passed into a proverb in Milton's song, cast in King's College Chapel the same "soft chequerings" upon their framework of stone while Wordsworth watched through the pauses of the anthem the winter afternoon's departing glow:—

> "Martyr, or King, or sainted Eremite,
> Whoe'er ye be that thus, yourselves unseen,
> Imbue your prison-bars with solemn sheen,
> Shine on until ye fade with coming Night."

From those shadowy seats whence Milton had heard "the pealing organ blow to the full-voiced choir below," Wordsworth too gazed upon—

> "That branching roof
> Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells
> Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
> Lingering, and wandering on as loth to die—
> Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
> That they were born for immortality."

Thus much, and more, there was of ennobling and unchangeable in the very aspect and structure of that ancient University, by which Wordsworth's mind was bent towards a kindred greatness. But of active moral and intellectual life there was at that time little to be found within her walls. The floodtide of her new life had not yet set in; she was still slumbering, as she had slumbered long, content to add to her majesty by the mere lapse of generations, and increment of her ancestral calm. Even had the intellectual life of the place been more stirring, it is doubtful how far Wordsworth would have been welcomed, or deserved to be welcomed, by authorities or students. He began residence at seventeen, and his northern nature was late to flower. There seems, in fact, to have been even less of visible promise about him than we should have expected: but rather something untamed and insubordinate, something heady and self-confident; an independence that seemed only rusticity, and an indolent ignorance which assumed too readily the tones of scorn. He was as yet a creature of the lakes and mountains, and love for Nature was only slowly leading him to love and reverence for man. Nay, such attraction as he had hitherto felt for the human race had been interwoven with her influence in a way so strange that to many minds it will seem a childish fancy not worth recounting. The objects of his idealization had been Cumbrian shepherds—a race whose personality seems to melt into Nature's—who are united as intimately with moor and mountain as the petrel with the sea.

> "A rambling school-boy, thus
> I felt his presence in his own domain
> As of a lord and master—or a power,
> Or genius, under Nature, under God,

Presiding ; and severest solitude
Had more commanding looks when he was there.
When up the lonely brooks on rainy days
Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills
By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes
Have glanced upon him distant a few steps,
In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,
His sheep like Greenland bears ; or, as he stepped
Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow
His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
By the deep radiance of the setting sun ;
Or him have I descried in distant sky,
A solitary object and sublime,
Above all height ! like an aerial cross
Stationed alone upon a spiry rock
Of the Chartreuse. for worship. Thus was man
Ennobled outwardly before my sight ;
And thus my heart was early introduced
To an unconscious love and reverence
Of human nature ; hence the human form
To me became an index of delight,
Of grace and honour, power and worthiness."

"This sanctity of Nature given to man"—this interfusion of human interest with the sublimity of moor and hill—formed a typical introduction to the manner in which Wordsworth regarded mankind to the end—depicting him as set, as it were, amid impersonal influences, which make his passion and struggle but a little thing ; as when painters give but a strip of their canvas to the fields and cities of men, and overhang the narrowed landscape with the space and serenity of heaven.

To this distant perception of man—of man "purified, removed, and to a distance that was fit"—was added, in his first summer vacation, a somewhat closer interest in the small joys and sorrows of the villagers of Hawkshead—a new sympathy for the old Dame in whose house the poet still lodged, for "the quiet woodman in the woods," and even for the "frank-hearted maids of rocky Cumberland," with whom he delighted to spend an occasional evening in dancing and country mirth. And since the events in this poet's life are for the most part inward and unseen, and depend upon some shock and coincidence between the operations of his spirit and the cosmorama of the external world, he has recorded with especial emphasis a certain sunrise which met him as he walked homewards from one of these scenes of rustic gaiety—a sunrise which may be said to have begun that poetic career which a sunset was to close :

"Ah ! need I say, dear Friend, that to the brim
My heart was full ; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me ; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit."

His second long vacation brought him a further gain in human

affections. His sister, of whom he had seen little for some years, was with him once more at Penrith, and with her another maiden,

> "By her exulting outside look of youth
> And placid under-countenance, first endeared;"

whose presence now laid the foundation of a love which was to be renewed and perfected when his need for it was full, and was to be his support and solace to his life's end. His third long vacation he spent in a walking tour in Switzerland. Of this, the commonest relaxation of studious youth, he speaks as of an "unprecedented course," indicating "a hardy slight of college studies and their set rewards." And it seems, indeed, probable that Wordsworth and his friend Jones were actually the first undergraduates who ever spent their summer in this way. The pages of the *Prelude* which narrate this excursion, and especially the description of the crossing of the Simplon—

> "The immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed"

form one of the most impressive parts of that singular autobiographical poem, which, at first sight so tedious and insipid, seems to gather force and meaning with each fresh perusal. These pages, which carry up to the verge of manhood the story of Wordsworth's career, contain, perhaps, as strong and simple a picture as we shall anywhere find of hardy English youth—its proud self-sufficingness and careless independence of all human things. Excitement, and thought, and joy, seem to come at once at its bidding; and the chequered and struggling existence of adult men seems something which it need never enter, and hardly deigns to comprehend.

Wordsworth and his friend encountered on his tour many a stirring symbol of the expectancy that was running through the nations of Europe. They landed at Calais "on the very eve of that great federal day" when the Trees of Liberty were planted all over France. They met on their return

> "The Brabant armies on the fret
> For battle in the cause of liberty."

But the exulting pulse that ran through the poet's veins could hardly yet pause to sympathise deeply even with what in the world's life appealed most directly to ardent youth.

> "A stripling, scarcely of the household then
> Of social life, I looked upon these things
> As from a distance; heard, and saw, and felt—
> Was touched, but with no intimate concern.
> I seemed to move along them as a bird
> Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues

Its sport or feeds in its proper element.
I wanted not that joy, I did not need
Such help. The ever-living universe,
Turn where I might, was opening out its glories;
And the independent spirit of pure youth
Called forth at every season new delights,
Spread round my steps like sunshine o'er green fields."

CHAPTER II.

RESIDENCE IN LONDON AND IN FRANCE.

WORDSWORTH took his B.A. degree in January, 1791, and quitted Cambridge with no fixed intentions as to his future career. "He did not feel himself," he said long afterwards, "good enough for the Church; he felt that his mind was not properly disciplined for that holy office, and that the struggle between his conscience and his impulses would have made life a torture. He also shrank from the law. He had studied military history with great interest, and the strategy of war; and he always fancied that he had talents for command; and he at one time thought of a military life; but then he was without connexions, and he felt if he were ordered to the West Indies his talents would not save him from the yellow fever, and he gave that up." He therefore repaired to London, and lived there for a time on a small allowance, and with no definite aim. His relations with the great city were of a very slight and external kind. He had few acquaintances, and spent his time mainly in rambling about the streets. His descriptions of this phase of his life have little interest. There is some flatness in an enumeration of the nationalities observable in a London crowd, concluding thus—

> "Malays, Lascars, the Tartar, the Chinese,
> And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns."

But Wordsworth's limitations were inseparably connected with his strength. And just as the flat scenery of Cambridgeshire had only served to intensify his love for such elements of beauty and grandeur as still were present in sky and fen, even so the bewilderment of London taught him to recognise with an intenser joy such fragments of things rustic, such aspects of things eternal, as were to be found amidst that rush and roar. To the frailer spirit of Hartley Coleridge the weight of London might seem a load impossible to shake off. "And what hath Nature," he plaintively asked—

> "And what hath Nature but the blank void sky
> And the thronged river toiling to the main?"

But Wordsworth saw more than this. He became, as one may say, the poet not of London considered as London, but of London

considered as a part of the country. Like his own *Farmer of Tilsbury Vale*—

> "In the throng of the Town like a Stranger is he,
> Like one whose own Country's far over the sea;
> And Nature, while through the great city he hies,
> Full ten times a day takes his heart by surprise."

Among the poems describing these sudden shocks of vision and memory none is more exquisite than the *Reverie of Poor Susan:*

> "At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
> Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years
> Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
> In the silence of morning the song of the Bird.
>
> "'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees
> A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;
> Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
> And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside."

The picture is one of those which come home to many a country heart with one of those sudden "revulsions into the natural" which philosophers assert to be the essence of human joy. But noblest and best known of all these poems is the *Sonnet on Westminster Bridge*, "Earth hath not anything to show more fair;" in which Nature has reasserted her dominion over the works of all the multitude of men; and in the early clearness the poet beholds the great City—as Sterling imagined it on his dying bed—"not as full of noise and dust and confusion, but as something silent, grand, and everlasting." And even in later life, when Wordsworth was often in London, and was welcome in any society, he never lost this external manner of regarding it. He was always of the same mind as the group of listeners in his *Power of Music:*

> "Now, Coaches and Chariots! roar on like a stream!
> Here are twenty Souls happy as souls in a dream:
> They are deaf to your murmurs, they care not for you,
> Nor what ye are flying, nor what ye pursue!"

He never made the attempt—vulgarised by so many a "fashionable novelist," and in which no poet has succeeded yet—to disentangle from that turmoil its elements of romance and of greatness; to enter that realm of emotion where Nature's aspects become the scarcely noted accessory of vicissitudes that transcend her own; to trace the passion or the anguish which whirl along some lurid vista towards a sun that sets in storm, or gaze across silent squares by summer moonlight amid a smell of dust and flowers.

But although Wordsworth passed thus through London unmodified and indifferent, the current of things was sweeping him on to mingle in a fiercer tumult—to be caught in the tides of a more vio-

lent and feverish life. In November, 1791, he landed in France, meaning to pass the winter at Orleans and learn French. Up to this date the French Revolution had impressed him in a rather unusual manner—namely, as being a matter of course. The explanation of this view is a somewhat singular one. Wordsworth's was an old family, and his connexions were some of them wealthy, and well placed in the world; but the chances of his education had been such that he could scarcely realise to himself any other than a democratic type of society. Scarcely once, he tells us, in his school days had he seen boy or man who claimed respect on the score of wealth and blood; and the manly atmosphere of Cambridge preserved even in her lowest days a society

> "Where all stood thus far
> Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all
> In honour, as in one community,
> Scholars and gentlemen;"

while the teachings of nature and the dignity of Cumbrian peasant life had confirmed his high opinion of the essential worth of man. The upheaval of the French people, therefore, and the downfall of privilege, seemed to him no portent for good or evil, but rather the tardy return of a society to its stable equilibrium. He passed through revolutionised Paris with satisfaction and sympathy, but with little active emotion, and proceeded first to Orleans, and then to Blois, between which places he spent nearly a year. At Orleans he became intimately acquainted with the nobly-born but republican General Beaupuis, an inspiring example of all in the Revolution that was self-devoted and chivalrous, and had compassion on the wretched poor. In conversation with him Wordsworth learnt with what new force the well-worn adages of the moralist fall from the lips of one who is called upon to put them at once in action, and to stake life itself on the verity of his maxims of honour. The poet's heart burned within him as he listened. He could not, indeed, help mourning sometimes at the sight of a dismantled chapel, or peopling in imagination the forest-glades in which they sat with the chivalry of a by-gone day. But he became increasingly absorbed in his friend's ardour, and the Revolution—*mulier formosa superne*—seemed to him big with all the hopes of man.

He returned to Paris in October, 1792—a month after the massacres of September; and he has described his agitation and dismay at the sight of such world-wide destinies swayed by the hands of such men. In a passage which curiously illustrates that reasoned self-confidence and deliberate boldness which for the most part he showed only in the peaceful incidents of a literary career, he has told us how he was on the point of putting himself forward as a leader of the Girondist party, in the conviction that his single-heartedness of aim would make him, in spite of foreign birth and imperfect speech, a point round which the confused instincts of the multitude might not impossibly rally.

Such a course of action—which, whatever its other results,

would undoubtedly have conducted him to the guillotine with his political friends in May, 1793—was rendered impossible by a somewhat undignified hindrance. Wordsworth, while in his own eyes "a patriot of the world," was in the eyes of others a young man of twenty-two, travelling on a small allowance, and running his head into unnecessary dangers. His funds were stopped, and he reluctantly returned to England at the close of 1792.

And now to Wordsworth, as to many other English patriots, there came, on a great scale, that form of sorrow which in private life is one of the most agonising of all—when two beloved beings, each of them erring greatly, become involved in bitter hate. The new-born Republic flung down to Europe as her battle-gage the head of a king. England, in an hour of horror that was almost panic, accepted the defiance, and war was declared between the two countries early in 1793. "No shock," says Wordsworth,

> Given to my moral nature had I known
> Down to that very moment; neither lapse
> Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
> A revolution, save at this one time;"

and the sound of the evening gun-fire at Portsmouth seemed at once the embodiment and the premonition of England's guilt and woe.

Yet his distracted spirit could find no comfort in the thought of France. For in France the worst came to the worst: and every thing vanished of liberty except the crimes committed in her name.

> Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!
> Were my day-thoughts, my nights were miserable.
> Through months, through years, long after the last beat
> Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep
> To me came rarely charged with natural gifts—
> Such ghastly visions had I of despair,
> And tyranny, and implements of death; . . .
> And levity in dungeons, where the dust
> Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene
> Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me
> In long orations, which I strove to plead
> Before unjust tribunals—with a voice
> Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
> Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt
> In the last place of refuge—my own soul."

These years of perplexity and disappointment, following on a season of overstrained and violent hopes, were the sharpest trial through which Wordsworth ever passed. The course of affairs in France, indeed, was such as seemed by an irony of fate to drive the noblest and firmest hearts into the worst aberrations. For first of all in that Revolution, Reason had appeared, as it were, in visible shape, and hand in hand with Pity and Virtue; then, as the welfare of the oppressed peasantry began to be lost sight of amid the brawls of the factions of Paris, all that was attractive and en-

thusiastic in the great movement seemed to disappear, but yet Reason might still be thought to find a closer realization here than among scenes more serene and fair; and, lastly, Reason set in blood and tyranny, and there was no more hope from France. But those who, like Wordsworth, had been taught by that great convulsion to disdain the fetters of sentiment and tradition, and to look on Reason as supreme, were not willing to relinquish their belief because violence had conquered her in one more battle. Rather they clung with the greater tenacity—"adhered," in Wordsworth's words,

> "More firmly to old tenets, and to prove
> Their temper, strained them more;"

cast off more decisively than ever the influences of tradition, and in their Utopian visions even wished to see the perfected race severed in its perfection from the memories of humanity, and from kinship with the struggling past.

Through a mood of this kind Wordsworth had to travel now. And his nature, formed for pervading attachments and steady memories, suffered grievously from the privation of much which even the coldest and calmest temper cannot forego without detriment and pain. For it is not with impunity that men commit themselves to the sole guidance of either of the two great elements of their being. The penalties of trusting to the emotions alone are notorious; and every day affords some instance of a character that has degenerated into a bundle of impulses, of a will that has become caprice. But the consequences of making Reason our tyrant instead of our king are almost equally disastrous. There is so little which Reason, divested of all emotional or instinctive supports, is able to prove to our satisfaction that a sceptical aridity is likely to take possession of the soul. It was thus with Wordsworth; he was driven to a perpetual questioning of all beliefs and analysis of all motives—

> "Till, demanding formal proof,
> And seeking it in everything, I lost
> All feeling of conviction; and, in fine,
> Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
> Yielded up moral questions in despair."

In this mood all those great generalised conceptions which are the food of our love, our reverence, our religion, dissolve away; and Wordsworth tells us that at this time

> "Even the visible universe
> Fell under the dominion of a taste
> Less spiritual, with microscopic view
> Was scanned, as I had scanned the moral world."

He looked on the operations of nature "in disconnection dull and spiritless;" he could no longer apprehend her unity nor feel her

charm. He retained, indeed, his craving for natural beauty, but in an uneasy and fastidious mood—

> "Giving way
> To a comparison of scene with scene,
> Bent overmuch on superficial things,
> Pampering myself with meagre novelties
> Of colour and proportion; to the moods
> Of time and season, to the moral power,
> The affections, and the spirit of the place,
> Insensible."

Such cold fits are common to all religions; they haunt the artist, the philanthropist, the philosopher, the saint. Often, they are due to some strain of egoism or ambition which has intermixed itself with the impersonal desire; sometimes, as in Wordsworth's case, to the persistent tension of a mind which has been bent too ardently towards an ideal scarce possible to man. And in this case, when the objects of a man's habitual admiration are true and noble, they will ever be found to suggest some antidote to the fatigues of their pursuit. We shall see as we proceed how a deepening insight into the lives of the peasantry around him—the happiness and virtue of simple Cumbrian homes—restored to the poet a serener confidence in human nature, amid all the shame and downfall of such hopes in France. And that still profounder loss of delight in Nature herself—that viewing of all things "in disconnection dull and spiritless," which, as it has been well said, is the truest definition of Atheism, inasmuch as a unity in the universe is the first element in our conception of God—this dark pathway also was not without its outlet into the day. For the God in Nature is not only a God of Beauty, but a God of Law; his unity can be apprehended in power as well as in glory; and Wordsworth's mind, "sinking inward upon itself from thought to thought," found rest for the time in that austere religion—Hebrew at once and scientific, common to a Newton and a Job—which is fostered by the prolonged contemplation of the mere Order of the sum of things.

> "Not in vain
> I had been taught to reverence a Power
> That is the visible quality and shape
> And image of right reason."

Not, indeed, in vain! For he felt now that there is no side of truth, however remote from human interests, no aspect of the universe, however awful and impersonal, which may not have power at some season to guide and support the spirit of man. When Goodness is obscured, when Beauty wearies, there are some souls which still can cling and grapple to the conception of eternal Law.

Of such stern consolations the poet speaks as having restored him in his hour of need. But he gratefully acknowledges also another solace of a gentler kind. It was about this time (1795)

that Wordsworth was blessed with the permanent companionship of his sister, to whom he was tenderly attached, but whom, since childhood, he had seen only at long intervals. Miss Wordsworth, after her father's death, had lived mainly with her maternal grandfather, Mr. Cookson, at Penrith; occasionally at Halifax with other relations; or at Forncett with her uncle, Dr. Cookson, Canon of Windsor. She was now able to join her favourite brother; and in this gifted woman Wordsworth found a gentler and sunnier likeness of himself; he found a love which never wearied, and a sympathy fervid without blindness, whose suggestions lay so directly in his mind's natural course that they seemed to spring from the same individuality, and to form at once a portion of his inmost being. The opening of this new era of domestic happiness demands a separate chapter.

CHAPTER III.

MISS WORDSWORTH.—LYRICAL BALLADS.—SETTLEMENT AT GRASMERE.

FROM among many letters of Miss Wordsworth's to a beloved friend (Miss Jane Pollard, afterwards Mrs. Marshall, of Hallsteads), which have been kindly placed at my disposal, I may without impropriety quote a few passages which illustrate the character and the affection of brother and sister alike. And first, in a letter (Forncett, February, 1792), comparing her brothers Christopher and William, she says: "Christopher is steady and sincere in his attachments. William has both these virtues in an eminent degree, and a sort of violence of affection, if I may so term it, which demonstrates itself every moment of the day, when the objects of his affection are present with him, in a thousand almost imperceptible attentions to their wishes, in a sort of restless watchfulness which I know not how to describe, a tenderness that never sleeps, and at the same time such a delicacy of manner as I have observed in few men." And again (Forncett, June, 1793), she writes to the same friend: "I have strolled into a neighbouring meadow, where I am enjoying the melody of birds, and the busy sounds of a fine summer's evening. But oh! how imperfect is my pleasure whilst I am alone! Why are you not seated with me? and my dear William, why is he not here also? I could almost fancy that I see you both near me. I hear *you* point out a spot, where, if we could erect a little cottage and call it our own, we should be the happiest of human beings. I see my brother fired with the idea of leading his sister to such a retreat. Our parlour is in a moment furnished, our garden is adorned by magic; the roses and honeysuckles spring at our command; the wood behind the house lifts its head, and furnishes us with a winter's shelter and a summer's noonday shade. My dear friend, I trust that erelong you will be, without the aid of imagination, the companion of my walks, and my dear William may be of our party. . . . He is now going upon a tour in the west of England, with a gentleman who was formerly a schoolfellow—a man of fortune, who is to bear all the expenses of the journey, and only requests the favour of William's company. He is perfectly at liberty to quit this companion as soon as anything more advantageous offers. But it is enough to say that I am likely to have the happiness of introducing you to my beloved brother. You

must forgive me for talking so much of him; my affection hurries me on, and makes me forget that you cannot be so much interested in the subject as I am. You do not know him; you do not know how amiable he is. Perhaps you reply, 'But I know how blinded you are.' Well, my dearest, I plead guilty at once; I *must* be blind; he cannot be so pleasing as my fondness makes him. I am willing to allow that half the virtues with which I fancy him endowed are the creation of my love; but surely I may be excused! He was never tired of comforting his sister; he never left her in anger; he always met her with joy; he preferred her society to every other pleasure—or rather, when we were so happy as to be within each other's reach, he had no pleasure when we were compelled to be divided. Do not, then, expect too much from this brother of whom I have delighted so to talk to you. In the first place, you must be with him more than once before he will be perfectly easy in conversation. In the second place, his person is not in his favour—at least I should think not; but I soon ceased to discover this—nay, I almost thought that the opinion which I had formed was erroneous. He is, however, certainly rather plain, though otherwise has an extremely thoughtful countenance; but when he speaks it is often lighted up by a smile which I think very pleasing. But enough, he is my brother; why should I describe him? I shall be launching again into panegyric."

The brother's language to his sister is equally affectionate. "How much do I wish," he writes in 1793, "that each emotion of pleasure or pain that visits your heart should excite a similar pleasure or a similar pain within me, by that sympathy which will almost identify us when we have stolen to our little cottage. . . . I will write to my uncle, and tell him that I cannot think of going anywhere before I have been with you. Whatever answer he gives me, I certainly will make a point of once more mingling my transports with yours. Alas! my dear sister, how soon must this happiness expire; yet there are moments worth ages."

And again, in the same year, he writes, "Oh, my dear, dear sister! with what transport shall I again meet you! with what rapture shall I again wear out the day in your sight! . . . I see you in a moment running, or rather flying, to my arms."

Wordsworth was in all things fortunate, but in nothing more fortunate than in this, that so unique a companion should have been ready to devote herself to him with an affection wholly free from egoism or jealousy—an affection that yearned only to satisfy his subtlest needs, and to transfuse all that was best in herself into his larger being. And, indeed, that fortunate admixture or influence, whencesoever derived, which raised the race of Wordsworth to poetic fame, was almost more dominant and conspicuous in Dorothy Wordsworth than in the poet himself. "The shooting lights of her wild eyes" reflected to the full the strain of imaginative emotion which was mingled in the poet's nature with that spirit of steadfast and conservative virtue which has already given to the family a Master of Trinity, two Bishops, and other divines and

scholars of weight and consideration. In the poet himself the conservative and ecclesiastical tendencies of his character became more and more apparent as advancing years stiffened the movements of the mind. In his sister the ardent element was less restrained; it showed itself in a most innocent direction, but it brought with it a heavy punishment. Her passion for nature and her affection for her brother led her into mountain rambles which were beyond her strength, and her last years were spent in a condition of physical and mental decay.

But at the time of which we are now speaking there was, perhaps, no one in the world who could have been to the poet such a companion as his sister became. She had not, of course, his grasp of mind or his poetic power; but her sensitiveness to nature was quite as keen as his, and her disposition resembled his "with sunshine added to daylight."

> "Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,
> Could they have known her, would have loved; methought
> Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
> That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
> And everything she looked on, should have had
> An intimation how she bore herself
> Towards them, and to all creatures."

Her journal of a tour in Scotland, and her description of a week on Ullswater, affixed to Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*—diaries not written for publication, but merely to communicate her own delight to intimate friends at a distance—are surely indescribably attractive in their naïve and tender feeling, combined with a delicacy of insight into natural beauty which was almost a new thing in the history of the world. If we compare, for instance, any of her descriptions of the Lakes with Southey's, we see the difference between mere literary skill, which can now be rivalled in many quarters, and that sympathetic intuition which comes of love alone. Even if we compare her with Gray, whose short notice of Cumberland bears on every page the stamp of a true poet, we are struck by the way in which Miss Wordsworth's tenderness for all living things gives character and pathos to her landscapes, and evokes from the wildest solitude some note that thrills the heart.

> "She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
> And humble cares, and delicate fears;
> A heart the fountain of sweet tears;
> And love, and thought, and joy."

The cottage life in her brother's company, which we have seen Miss Wordsworth picturing to herself with girlish ardour, was destined to be realised no long time afterwards, thanks to the unlooked-for outcome of another friendship. If the poet's sister was his first admirer, Raisley Calvert may fairly claim the second place. Calvert was the son of the steward of the Duke of Norfolk, who

possessed large estates in Cumberland. He attached himself to Wordsworth, and in 1793 and 1794 the friends were much together. Calvert was then attacked by consumption, and Wordsworth nursed him with patient care. It was found at his death that he had left his friend a legacy of 900*l.* "The act," says Wordsworth, "was done entirely from a confidence on his part that I had powers and attainments which might be of use to mankind. Upon the interest of the 900*l.*—400*l.* being laid out in an annuity—with 200*l.* deducted from the principal, and 100*l.* a legacy to my sister, and 100*l.* more which the *Lyrical Ballads* have brought me, my sister and I contrived to live seven years, nearly eight."

Trusting in this small capital, and with nothing to look to in the future except the uncertain prospect of the payment of Lord Lonsdale's debt to the family, Wordsworth settled with his sister at Racedown, near Crewkere, in Dorsetshire, in the autumn of 1795, the choice of this locality being apparently determined by the offer of a cottage on easy terms. Here, in the first home which he had possessed, Wordsworth's steady devotion to poetry began. He had already, in 1792,* published two little poems, the *Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, which Miss Wordsworth (to whom the *Evening Walk* was addressed) criticises with candour in a letter to the same friend (Forncett, February, 1792):

"The scenes which he describes have been viewed with a poet's eye, and are portrayed with a poet's pencil; and the poem contains many passages exquisitely beautiful; but they also contain many faults, the chief of which are obscurity and a too frequent use of some particular expressions and uncommon words; for instance, *moveless*, which he applies in a sense, if not new, at least different from its ordinary one. By 'moveless,' when applied to the swan, he means that sort of motion which is smooth without agitation; it is a very beautiful epithet, but ought to have been cautiously used. The word *viewless* also is introduced far too often. I regret exceedingly that he did not submit the works to the inspection of some friend before their publication, and he also joins with me in this regret."

These poems show a careful and minute observation of nature, but their versification—still reminding us of the imitators of Pope—has little originality or charm. They attracted the admiration of Coleridge, but had no further success.

At Racedown Wordsworth finished *Guilt and Sorrow*, a poem gloomy in tone and written mainly in his period of depression and unrest; and wrote a tragedy called *The Borderers*, of which only a few lines show any promise of future excellence. He then wrote *The Ruined Cottage*, now incorporated in the First Book of the *Excursion*. This poem, on a subject thoroughly suited to his powers, was his first work of merit; and Coleridge, who visited the quiet household in June, 1797, pronounces this poem "superior, I hesitate not to aver, to anything in our language which in any way resem-

* The *Memoirs* say in 1793, but the following MS. letter of 1792 speaks of them as already published.

bles it." In July, 1797, the Wordsworths removed to Alfoxden, a large house in Somersetshire, near Netherstowey, where Coleridge was at that time living. Here Wordsworth added to his income by taking as pupil a young boy, the hero of the trifling poem *Anecdote for Fathers*, a son of Mr. Basil Montagu; and here he composed many of his smaller pieces. He has described the origin of the *Ancient Mariner* and the *Lyrical Ballads* in a well-known passage, part of which I must here repeat:

"In the autumn of 1797, Mr. Coleridge, my sister, and myself started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Linton, and the Valley of Stones near to it; and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem, to be sent to the *New Monthly Magazine*. In the course of this walk was planned the poem of the *Ancient Mariner*, founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention; but certain parts I suggested: for example, some crime was to be committed which was to bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke's *Voyages*, a day or two before, that while doubling Cape Horn they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. 'Suppose,' said I, 'you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime.' The incident was thought fit for the purpose, and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead man, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. We began the composition together, on that to me memorable evening. I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular—

> 'And listened like a three years' child;
> The Mariner had his will.'

As we endeavoured to proceed conjointly our respective manners proved so widely different, that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog. The *Ancient Mariner* grew and grew, till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation of five pounds; and we began to think of a volume, which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects, taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium."

The volume of *Lyrical Ballads*, whose first beginnings have here been traced, was published in the autumn of 1798, by Mr. Cottle, at Bristol. This volume contained several poems which have been justly blamed for triviality—as *The Thorn*, *Goody Blake*, *The Idiot Boy;* several in which, as in *Simon Lee*, triviality is mingled with much real pathos; and some, as *Expostulation and Reply* and *The Tables Turned*, which are of the very essence of Wordsworth's nature. It is hardly too much to say that, if these

two last-named poems—to the careless eye so slight and trifling—were all that had remained from Wordsworth's hand, they would have "spoken to the comprehending" of a new individuality, as distinct and unmistakable in its way as that which Sappho has left engraven on the world forever in words even fewer than these. And the volume ended with a poem which Wordsworth composed in 1798, in one day, during a tour with his sister to Tintern and Chepstow. The *Lines written above Tintern Abbey* have become, as it were, the *locus classicus*, or consecrated formulary of the Wordsworthian faith. They say in brief what it is the work of the poet's biographer to say in detail.

As soon as this volume was published Wordsworth and his sister sailed for Hamburg, in the hope that their imperfect acquaintance with the German language might be improved by the heroic remedy of a winter at Goslar. But at Goslar they do not seem to have made any acquaintances, and their self-improvement consisted mainly in reading German books to themselves. The four months spent at Goslar, however, were the very bloom of Wordsworth's poetic career. Through none of his poems has the peculiar loveliness of English scenery and English girlhood shone more delicately than through those which came to him as he paced the frozen gardens of that desolate city. Here it was that he wrote *Lucy Gray*, and *Ruth*, and *Nutting*, and the *Poet's Epitaph*, and other poems known now to most men as possessing in its full fragrance his especial charm. And here it was that the memory of some emotion prompted the lines on *Lucy*. Of the history of that emotion he has told us nothing; I forbear, therefore, to inquire concerning it, or even to speculate. That it was to the poet's honour, I do not doubt; but who ever learned such secrets rightly? or who should wish to learn? It is best to leave the sanctuary of all hearts inviolate, and to respect the reserve not only of the living but of the dead. Of these poems, almost alone, Wordsworth in his autobiographical notes has said nothing whatever. One of them he suppressed for years, and printed only in a later volume. One can, indeed, well imagine that there may be poems which a man may be willing to give to the world only in the hope that their pathos will be, as it were, protected by its own intensity, and that those who are worthiest to comprehend will be least disposed to discuss them.

The autobiographical notes on his own works above alluded to were dictated by the poet to his friend Miss Isabella Fenwick, at her urgent request, in 1843, and preserve many interesting particulars as to the circumstances under which each poem was composed. They are to be found printed entire among Wordsworth's prose works, and I shall therefore cite them only occasionally. Of *Lucy Gray*, for instance, he says—

"It was founded on a circumstance told me by my sister, of a little girl who, not far from Halifax, in Yorkshire, was bewildered in a snowstorm. Her footsteps were tracked by her parents to the middle of the

lock of a canal, and no other vestige of her, backward or forward, could be traced. The body, however, was found in the canal. The way in which the incident was treated, and the spiritualising of the character, might furnish hints for contrasting the imaginative influence which I have endeavoured to throw over common life, with Crabbe's matter-of-fact style of handling subjects of the same kind."

And of the *Lines written in Germany*, 1798–99—

"A bitter winter it was when these verses were composed by the side of my sister, in our lodgings, at a draper's house, in the romantic imperial town of Goslar, on the edge of the Hartz forest. So severe was the cold of this winter that, when we passed out of the parlour warmed by the stove, our cheeks were struck by the air as by cold iron. I slept in a room over a passage that was not ceiled. The people of the house used to say, rather unfeelingly, that they expected I should be frozen to death some night; but with the protection of a pelisse lined with fur, and a dog's-skin bonnet, such as was worn by the peasants, I walked daily on the ramparts or on a sort of public ground or garden, in which was a pond. Here I had no companion but a kingfisher, a beautiful creature that used to glance by me. I consequently became much attached to it. During these walks I composed *The Poet's Epitaph*."

Seldom has there been a more impressive instance of the contrast, familiar to biographers, between the apparent insignificance and the real importance of their hero in undistinguished youth. To any one considering Wordsworth as he then was—a rough and somewhat stubborn young man, who, in nearly thirty years of life, had seemed alternately to idle without grace and to study without advantage—it might well have seemed incredible that he could have anything new or valuable to communicate to mankind. Where had been his experience? or where was the indication of that wealth of sensuous emotion which in such a nature as Keats's seems almost to dispense with experience, and to give novelty by giving vividness to such passions as are known to all? If Wordsworth were to impress mankind it must be, one might have thought, by travelling out of himself altogether—by revealing some such energy of imagination as can create a world of romance and adventure in the shyest heart. But this was not so to be. Already Wordsworth's minor poems had dealt most entirely with his own feelings, and with the objects actually before his eyes; and it was at Goslar that he planned, and on the day of his quitting Goslar that he began, a much longer poem, whose subject was to be still more intimately personal, being the development of his own mind. This poem, dedicated to Coleridge, and written in the form of a confidence bestowed on an intimate friend, was finished in 1805, but was not published till after the poet's death Mrs. Wordsworth then named it *The Prelude*, indicating thus the relation which it bears to the *Excursion*—or, rather, to the projected poem of the *Recluse*, of which the *Excursion* was to form only the Second out of three Divisions. One Book of the First Division of the *Recluse* was written, but is yet unpublished; the Third Division was never even

begun, and "the materials," we are told, "of which it would have been formed have been incorporated, for the most part, in the author's other publications." Nor need this change of plan be regretted: didactic poems admit easily of mutilation; and all that can be called plot in this series of works is contained in the *Prelude*, in which we see Wordsworth arriving at those convictions which in the *Excursion* he pauses to expound.

It would be too much to say that Wordsworth has been wholly successful in the attempt—for such the *Prelude* virtually is—to write an epic poem on his own education. Such a poem must almost necessarily appear tedious and egoistic, and Wordsworth's manner has not tact enough to prevent these defects from being felt to the full. On the contrary, in his constant desire frugally to extract, as it were, its full teaching from the minutest event which has befallen him, he supplements the self-complacency of the autobiographer with the conscientious exactness of the moralist, and is apt to insist on trifles such as lodge in the corners of every man's memory, as if they were unique lessons vouchsafed to himself alone.

Yet it follows from this very temper of mind that there is scarcely any autobiography which we can read with such implicit confidence as the *Prelude*. In the case of this, as of so many of Wordsworth's productions, our first dissatisfaction at the form which the poem assumes yields to a recognition of its fitness to express precisely what the poet intends. Nor are there many men who, in recounting the story of their own lives, could combine a candour so absolute with so much of dignity; who could treat their personal history so impartially as a means of conveying lessons of general truth; or who, while chronicling such small things, could remain so great. The *Prelude* is a book of good augury for human nature. We feel in reading it as if the stock of mankind were sound. The soul seems going on from strength to strength by the mere development of her inborn power. And the scene with which the poem at once opens and concludes—the return to the Lake country as to a permanent and satisfying home—places the poet at last amid his true surroundings, and leaves us to contemplate him as completed by a harmony without him, which he of all men most needed to evoke the harmony within.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ENGLISH LAKES.

THE lakes and mountains of Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire are singularly fitted to supply such elements of moral sustenance as nature's aspects can afford to man. There are, indeed, many mountain regions of greater awfulness; but prospects of ice and terror should be a rare stimulant rather than an habitual food; and the physical difficulties inseparable from immense elevations depress the inhabitant and preoccupy the traveller. There are many lakes under a more lustrous sky; but the healthy activities of life demand a scene brilliant without languor, and a beauty which can refresh and satisfy rather than lull or overpower. Without advancing any untenable claim to British pre-eminence in the matter of scenery, we may, perhaps, follow on both these points the judgment which Wordsworth has expressed in his *Guide to the Lakes*, a work which condenses the results of many years of intimate observation.

"Our tracts of wood and water," he says, "are almost diminutive in comparison (with Switzerland); therefore, as far as sublimity is dependent upon absolute bulk and height, and atmospherical influences in connexion with these, it is obvious that there can be no rivalship. But a short residence among the British mountains will furnish abundant proof that, after a certain point of elevation, viz., that which allows of compact and fleecy clouds settling upon, or sweeping over, the summits, the sense of sublimity depends more upon form and relation of objects to each other than upon their actual magnitude; and that an elevation of 3000 feet is sufficient to call forth in a most impressive degree the creative, and magnifying, and softening powers of the atmosphere."

And again, as to climate: "The rain," he says, "here comes down heartily, and is frequently succeeded by clear bright weather, when every brook is vocal, and every torrent sonorous; brooks and torrents which are never muddy even in the heaviest floods. Days of unsettled weather, with partial showers, are very frequent; but the showers, darkening or brightening as they fly from hill to hill, are not less grateful to the eye than finely interwoven passages of gay and sad music are touching to the ear. Vapours, exhaling from the lakes and meadows after sunrise in a hot season or in moist weather brooding upon the heights, or descending tow-

ards the valleys with inaudible motion, give a visionary character to everything around them; and are in themselves so beautiful as to dispose us to enter into the feelings of those simple nations (such as the Laplanders of this day) by whom they are taken for guardian deities of the mountains; or to sympathise with others who have fancied these delicate apparitions to be the spirits of their departed ancestors. Akin to these are fleecy clouds resting upon the hill-tops; they are not easily managed in picture, with their accompaniments of blue sky, but how glorious are they in nature! how pregnant with imagination for the poet! And the height of the Cumbrian mountains is sufficient to exhibit daily and hourly instances of those mysterious attachments. Such clouds, cleaving to their stations, or lifting up suddenly their glittering heads from behind rocky barriers, or hurrying out of sight with speed of the sharpest edge, will often tempt an inhabitant to congratulate himself on belonging to a country of mists and clouds and storms, and make him think of the blank sky of Egypt, and of the cerulean vacancy of Italy, as an unanimated and even a sad spectacle."

The consciousness of a preceding turmoil brings home to us best the sense of perfect peace; and a climate accustomed to storm-cloud and tempest can melt sometimes into "a day as still as heaven," with a benignant tranquillity which calmer regions can scarcely know. Such a day Wordsworth has described in language of such delicate truth and beauty as only a long and intimate love can inspire:

"It has been said that in human life there are moments worth ages. In a more subdued tone of sympathy may we affirm, that in the climate of England there are, for the lover of nature, days which are worth whole months, I might say, even years. One of these favoured days sometimes occurs in spring-time, when that soft air is breathing over the blossoms and new-born verdure which inspired Buchanan with his beautiful Ode to the First of May; the air which, in the luxuriance of his fancy, he likens to that of the golden age—to that which gives motion to the funereal cypresses on the banks of Lethe; to the air which is to salute beatified spirits when expiatory fires shall have consumed the earth with all her habitations. But it is in autumn that days of such affecting influence most frequently intervene. The atmosphere seems refined, and the sky rendered more crystalline, as the vivifying heat of the year abates; the lights and shadows are more delicate; the colouring is richer and more finely harmonised; and, in this season of stillness, the ear being unoccupied, or only gently excited, the sense of vision becomes more susceptible of its appropriate enjoyments. A resident in a country like this which we are treating of will agree with me that the presence of a lake is indispensable to exhibit in perfection the beauty of one of these days; and he must have experienced, while looking on the unruffled waters, that the imagination by their aid is carried into recesses of feeling otherwise impenetrable. The reason of this is, that the heavens are not only brought down into the bosom of the earth, but that the earth is mainly looked at, and thought of, through the medium of a purer element. The happiest time is when the equinoctial gales are departed; but their fury may probably be called to mind by the sight of a few shattered boughs, whose

leaves do not differ in colour from the faded foliage of the stately oaks from which these relics of the storm depend: all else speaks of tranquillity; not a breath of air, no restlessness of insects, and not a moving object perceptible—except the clouds gliding in the depths of the lake, or the traveller passing along, an inverted image, whose motion seems governed by the quiet of a time to which its archetype, the living person, is perhaps insensible; or it may happen that the figure of one of the larger birds, a raven or a heron, is crossing silently among the reflected clouds, while the voice of the real bird, from the element aloft, gently awakens in the spectator the recollection of appetites and instincts, pursuits and occupations, that deform and agitate the world, yet have no power to prevent nature from putting on an aspect capable of satisfying the most intense cravings for the tranquil, the lovely, and the perfect to which man, the noblest of her creatures, is subject."

The scene described here is one as exquisite in detail as majestic in general effect. And it is characteristic of the region in which Wordsworth's love was given that there is no corner of it without a meaning and a charm; that the open record of its immemorial past tells us at every turn that all agencies have conspired for loveliness and ruin itself has been benign. A passage of Wordsworth's describing the character of the lake-shores illustrates this fact with loving minuteness:

"Sublimity is the result of nature's first great dealings with the superficies of the Earth; but the general tendency of her subsequent operations is towards the production of beauty, by a multiplicity of symmetrical parts uniting in a consistent whole. This is everywhere exemplified along the margins of these lakes. Masses of rock, that have been precipitated from the heights into the area of waters, lie in some places like stranded ships, or have acquired the compact structure of jutting piers, or project in little peninsulas crested with native wood. The smallest rivulet, one whose silent influx is scarcely noticeable in a season of dry weather, so faint is the dimple made by it on the smooth surface of the lake, will be found to have been not useless in shaping, by its deposits of gravel and soil in time of flood, a curve that would not otherwise have existed. But the more powerful brooks, encroaching upon the level of the lake, have, in course of time, given birth to ample promontories of sweeping outline, that contrast boldly with the longitudinal base of the steeps on the opposite shore; while their flat or gently-sloping surfaces never fail to introduce, into the midst of desolation and barrenness, the elements of fertility, even where the habitations of men may not have been raised."

With this we may contrast, as a companion picture, the poet's description of the tarns, or lonely bodies of water, which lie here and there among the hills:

"They are difficult of access and naked; yet some of them are, in their permanent forms, very grand, and there are accidents of things which would make the meanest of them interesting. At all events, one of these pools is an acceptable sight to the mountain wanderer, not merely as an incident that diversifies the prospect, but as forming in his mind a centre or conspicuous point to which objects, otherwise disconnected or insubordinated, may be referred. Some few have a varied outline, with bold

heath-clad promontories; and as they mostly lie at the foot of a steep precipice, the water, where the sun is not shining upon it, appears black and sullen, and round the margin huge stones and masses of rock are scattered, some defying conjecture as to the means by which they came thither, and others obviously fallen from on high, the contribution of ages. A not unpleasing sadness is induced by this perplexity and these images of decay; while the prospect of a body of pure water, unattended with groves and other cheerful rural images by which fresh water is usually accompanied, and unable to give furtherance to the meagre vegetation around it, excites a sense of some repulsive power strongly put forth, and thus deepens the melancholy natural to such scenes."

To those who love to deduce the character of a population from the character of their race and surroundings the peasantry of Cumberland and Westmoreland form an attractive theme. Drawn in great part from the strong Scandinavian stock, they dwell in a land solemn and beautiful as Norway itself, but without Norway's rigour and penury, and with still lakes and happy rivers instead of Norway's inarming melancholy sea. They are a mountain folk; but their mountains are no precipices of insuperable snow, such as keep the dwellers in some Swiss hamlet shut in ignorance and stagnating into idiocy. These barriers divide only to concentrate, and environ only to endear; their guardianship is but enough to give an added unity to each group of kindred homes. And thus it is that the Cumbrian dalesmen have afforded perhaps as near a realisation as human facts have yet allowed of the rural society which statesmen desire for their country's greatness. They have given an example of substantial comfort strenuously won: of home affections intensified by independent strength; of isolation without ignorance, and of a shrewd simplicity; of an hereditary virtue which needs no support from fanaticism, and to which honour is more than law.

The school of political economists, moreover, who urge the advantage of a peasant proprietary, of small independent holdings—as at once drawing from the land the fullest produce and rearing upon it the most vigorous and provident population—this school, as is well known, finds in the *statesmen* of Cumberland one of its favourite examples. In the days of border-wars, when the first object was to secure the existence of as many armed men as possible, in readiness to repel the Scot, the abbeys and great proprietors in the north readily granted small estates on military tenure, which tenure, when personal service in the field was no longer needed, became in most cases an absolute ownership. The attachment of these *statesmen* to their hereditary estates, the heroic efforts which they would make to avoid parting with them, formed an impressive phenomenon in the little world—a world at once of equality and of conservatism—which was the scene of Wordsworth's childish years, and which remained his manhood's ideal.

The growth of large fortunes in England, and the increased competition for land, has swallowed up many of these small independent holdings in the extensive properties of wealthy men. And

at the same time the spread of education, and the improved poor-laws and other legislation, by raising the condition of other parts of England, have tended to obliterate the contrast which was so marked in Wordsworth's day. How marked that contrast was, a comparison of Crabbe's poems with Wordsworth's will sufficiently indicate. Both are true painters; but while in the one we see poverty as something gross and degrading, and the *Tales of the Village* stand out from a background of pauperism and crime; in the other picture poverty means nothing worse than privation, and the poet in the presence of the most tragic outcast of fortune could still

> "Have laughed himself to scorn to find
> In that decrepit man so firm a mind."

Nay, even when a state far below the *Leech-Gatherer's* has been reached, and mind and body alike are in their last decay, the life of the *Old Cumberland Beggar*, at one remove from nothingness, has yet a dignity and a usefulness of its own. His fading days are passed in no sad asylum of vicious or gloomy age, but amid neighbourly kindnesses, and in the sanity of the open air; and a life that is reduced to its barest elements has yet a hold on the liberality of nature and the affections of human hearts.

So long as the inhabitants of a region so solitary and beautiful have neither many arts nor many wishes, save such as the nature which they know has suggested, and their own handiwork can satisfy, so long are their presence and habitations likely to be in harmony with the scenes around them. Nay, man's presence is almost always needed to draw out the full meaning of Nature, to illustrate her bounty by his glad well-being, and to hint by his contrivances of precaution at her might and terror. Wordsworth's description of the cottages of Cumberland depicts this unconscious adaptation of man's abode to his surroundings, with an eye which may be called at pleasure that of painter or of poet.

"The dwelling-houses and contiguous out-houses are in many instances of the colour of the native rock out of which they have been built; but frequently the dwelling—or Fire-house, as it is ordinarily called—has been distinguished from the barn or byre by roughcast and whitewash, which, as the inhabitants are not hasty in renewing it, in a few years acquires by the influence of weather a tint at once sober and variegated. As these houses have been, from father to son, inhabited by persons engaged in the same occupations, yet necessarily with changes in their circumstances, they have received without incongruity additions and accommodations adapted to the needs of each successive occupant, who being for the most part proprietor, was at liberty to follow his own fancy, so that these humble dwellings remind the contemplative spectator of a production of nature, and may (using a strong expression) rather be said to have grown than to have been erected—to have risen, by an instinct of their own, out of the native rock—so little is there in them of formality, such is their wildness and beauty.

"These dwellings, mostly built, as has been said, of rough unhewn stone, are roofed with slates, which were rudely taken from the quarry

before the present art of splitting them was understood, and are therefore rough and uneven in their surface, so that both the coverings and sides of the houses have furnished places of rest for the seeds of lichens, mosses, ferns, and flowers. Hence buildings, which in their very form call to mind the processes of nature, do thus, clothed in part with a vegetable garb, appear to be received into the bosom of the living principle of things, as it acts and exists among the woods and fields, and by their colour and their shape affectingly direct the thoughts to that tranquil course of nature and simplicity along which the humble-minded inhabitants have through so many generations been led. Add the little garden with its shed for bee-hives, its small bed of potherbs, and its borders and patches of flowers for Sunday posies, with sometimes a choice few too much prized to be plucked; an orchard of proportioned size; a cheese-press, often supported by some tree near the door; a cluster of embowering sycamores for summer shade, with a tall fir through which the winds sing when other trees are leafless; the little rill or household spout murmuring in all seasons: combine these incidents and images together, and you have the representative idea of a mountain cottage in this country—so beautifully formed in itself, and so richly adorned by the hand of Nature."

These brief descriptions may suffice to indicate the general character of a district which in Wordsworth's early days had a distinctive unity which he was the first fully to appreciate, which was at its best during his long lifetime, and which has already begun to disappear. The mountains had waited long for a full adoration, an intelligent worship. At last "they were enough beloved." And if now the changes wrought around them recall too often the poet's warning, how

> "All that now delights thee, from the day
> On which it should be touched, shall melt, and melt away—"

yet they have gained something which cannot be taken from them. Not mines, nor railways, nor monster excursions, nor reservoirs, nor Manchester herself, "toute entière à sa proie attachée," can deprive lake and hill of Wordsworth's memory, and the love which once they knew.

Wordsworth's life was from the very first so ordered as to give him the most complete and intimate knowledge both of district and people. There was scarcely a mile of ground in the Lake country over which he had not wandered; scarcely a prospect which was not linked with his life by some tie of memory. Born at Cockermouth, on the outskirts of the district, his mind was gradually led on to its beauty: and his first recollections were of Derwent's grassy holms and rocky falls, with Skiddaw, "bronzed with deepest radiance," towering in the eastern sky. Sent to school at Hawkshead at eight years old, Wordsworth's scene was transferred to the other extremity of the Lake district. It was in this quaint old town, on the banks of Esthwaite Water, that the "fair seed-time of his soul" was passed; it was here that his boyish delight in exercise and adventure grew, and melted in its turn into a more impersonal yearning, a deeper absorption into the beauty and the wonder of the world. And even the records of his boyish amusements

come to us each on a background of nature's majesty and calm. Setting springs for woodcock on the grassy moors at night, at nine years old, he feels himself "a trouble to the peace" that dwells among the moon and stars overhead; and when he has appropriated a woodcock caught by somebody else, "sounds of undistinguishable motion" embody the viewless pursuit of Nemesis among the solitary hills. In the perilous search for the raven's nest, as he hangs on the face of the naked crags of Yewdale, he feels for the first time that sense of detachment from external things which a position of strange unreality will often force on the mind.

"Oh, at that time
When on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds!"

The innocent rapine of *nutting* taught him to feel that there is a spirit in the woods—a presence which too rude a touch of ours will desecrate and destroy.

The neighbouring lakes of Coniston, Esthwaite, Windermere, have left similar traces of the gradual upbuilding of his spirit. It was on a promontory on Coniston that the sun's last rays, gilding the eastern hills above which he had first appeared, suggested the boy's first impulse of spontaneous poetry, in the resolve that, wherever life should lead him, his last thoughts should fall on the scenes where his childhood was passing now. It was on Esthwaite that the "huge peak" of Wetherlam, following him (as it seemed) as he rowed across the starlit water, suggested the dim conception of "unknown modes of being," and a life that is not ours. It was round Esthwaite that the boy used to wander with a friend at early dawn, rejoicing in the charm of words in tuneful order, and repeating together their favourite verses, till "sounds of exultation echoed through the groves." It was on Esthwaite that the band of skaters "hissed along the polished ice in games confederate," from which Wordsworth would sometimes withdraw himself and pause suddenly in full career, to feel in that dizzy silence the mystery of a rolling world.

A passage, less frequently quoted, in describing a boating excursion on Windermere illustrates the effect of some small point of human interest in concentrating and realising the diffused emotion which radiates from a scene of beauty:

"But, ere nightfall,
When in our pinnace we returned at leisure
Over the shadowy lake, and to the beach
Of some small island steered our course with one,
The minstrel of the troop, and left him there,
And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute
Alone upon the rock—oh, then the calm
And dead still water lay upon my mind
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
Never before so beautiful, sank down
Into my heart, and held me like a dream!"

The passage which describes the school-boy's call to the owls—the lines of which Coleridge said that he should have exclaimed "Wordsworth!" if he had met them running wild in the deserts of Arabia—paints a somewhat similar rush of feeling with a still deeper charm. The "gentle shock of mild surprise" which in the pauses of the birds' jocund din *carries far into his heart the sound of mountain torrents*—the very mingling of the grotesque and the majestic—brings home the contrast between our transitory energies and the mystery around us which returns ever the same to the moments when we pause and are at peace.

It is round the two small lakes of Grasmere and Rydal that the memories of Wordsworth are most thickly clustered. On one or other of these lakes he lived for fifty years—the first half of the present century; and there is not in all that region a hill-side walk or winding valley which has not heard him murmuring out his verses as they slowly rose from his heart. The cottage at Townend, Grasmere, where he first settled, is now surrounded by the out-buildings of a busy hotel, and the noisy stream of traffic, and the sight of the many villas which spot the valley, give a new pathos to the sonnet in which Wordsworth deplores the alteration which even his own residence might make in the simplicity of the lonely scene:

"Well may'st thou halt, and gaze with brightening eye!
The lovely cottage in the guardian nook
Hath stirred thee deeply; with its own dear brook
Its own small pasture, almost its own sky!
But covet not the abode: forbear to sigh,
As many do, repining while they look;
Intruders—who would tear from Nature's book
This precious leaf with harsh impiety.
Think what the home must be if it were thine,
Even thine, though few thy wants! Roof, wind
The very flowers are sacred to the poor,
The roses to the porch which they entwine:
Yea, all that now enchants thee, from the day
On which it should be touched, would melt, and melt away."

The *Poems on the Naming of Places* belong for the most part to this neighbourhood. *Emma's Dell* on Easdale Beck, *Point Rash-Judgment* on the eastern shore of Grasmere, *Mary's Pool* in Rydal Park, *William's Peak* on Stone Arthur, *Joanna's Rock* on the banks of Rotha, and *John's Grove* near White Moss Common, have been identified by the loving search of those to whom every memorial of that simple-hearted family group has still a charm.

It is on Greenhead Ghyll—"upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale"—that the poet has laid the scene of *Michael*, the poem which paints with such detailed fidelity both the inner and the outward life of a typical Westmoreland "statesman." And the upper road from Grasmere to Rydal, superseded now by the road along the lake-side, and left as a winding foot-path among rock and fern, was one of his most habitual haunts. Of another such haunt his

friend Lady Richardson says, "The *Prelude* was chiefly composed in a green mountain terrace, on the Easdale side of Helm Crag, known by the name of Under Lancrigg, a place which he used to say he knew by heart. The ladies sat at their work on the hill-side while he walked to and fro on the smooth green mountain turf, humming out his verses to himself, and then repeating them to his sympathising and ready scribes, to be noted down on the spot and transcribed at home."

The neighbourhood of the poet's later home at Rydal Mount is equally full of associations. Two of the *Evening Voluntaries* were composed by the side of Rydal Mere. The *Wild Duck's Nest* was on one of the Rydal islands. It was on the fells of Loughrigg that the poet's fancy loved to plant an imperial castle. And *Wansfell's* green slope still answers with many a change of glow and shadow to the radiance of the sinking sun.

Hawkshead and Rydal, then, may be considered as the poet's principal centres, and the scenery in their neighbourhood has received his most frequent attention. The Duddon, a seldom-visited stream on the south-west border of the Lake district, has been traced by him from source to outfall in a series of sonnets. Langdale, and Little Langdale, with Blea Tarn lying in it, form the principal scene of the discourses in the *Excursion.* The more distant lakes and mountains were often visited, and are often alluded to. The scene of *The Brothers*, for example, is laid in Ennerdale; and the index of the minor poems will supply other instances. But it is chiefly round two lines of road leading from Grasmere that Wordsworth's associations cluster—the route over Dunmailraise, which led him to Keswick, to Coleridge and Southey at Greta Hall, and to other friends in that neighbourhood; and the route over Kirkstone, which led him to Ullswater, and the friendly houses of Patterdale, Hallsteads, and Lowther Castle. The first of these two routes was that over which the *Waggoner* plied; it skirts the lovely shore of Thirlmere—a lonely sheet of water, of exquisite irregularity of outline, and fringed with delicate verdure, which the Corporation of Manchester has lately bought to embank it into a reservoir. *Dedecorum pretiosus emptor!* This lake was a favorite haunt of Wordsworth's; and upon a rock on its margin, where he and Coleridge, coming from Keswick and Grasmere, would often meet, the two poets, with the other members of Wordsworth's loving household group, inscribed the initial letters of their names. To the "monumental power" of this Rock of Names Wordsworth appeals, in lines written when the happy company who engraved them had already been severed by distance and death:

> "O thought of pain,
> That would impair it or profane!
> And fail not Thou, loved Rock, to keep
> Thy charge when we are laid asleep."

The rock may still be seen, but is to be submerged in the new reservoir. In the vale of Keswick itself, Applethwaite, Skiddaw,

St. Herbert's Island, Lodore, are commemorated in sonnets or inscriptions. And the Borrowdale yew-trees have inspired some of the poet's noblest lines—lines breathing all the strange forlornness of Glaramara's solitude, and the withering vault of shade.

The route from Rydal to Ullswater is still more thickly studded with poetic allusions. The *Pass of Kirkstone* is the theme of a characteristic ode; Grisdale Tarn and Helvellyn recur again and again: and Aira Force was one of the spots which the poet best loved to describe as well as to visit. It was on the shores of Further Gowbarrow that the *Daffodils* danced beneath the trees. These references might be much further multiplied; and the loving diligence of disciples has set before us "the Lake district as interpreted by Wordsworth" through a multitude of details. But enough has been said to show how completely the poet had absorbed the influences of his dwelling-places; how unique a representative he had become of the lovely district of his birth; how he had made it subject to him by comprehending it, and his own by love.

He visited other countries and described other scenes. Scotland, Wales, Switzerland, France, Germany, Italy, have all a place in his works. His familiarity with other scenery helped him, doubtless, to a better appreciation of the Lake country than he could have gained had he never left it. And, on the other hand, like Cæsar in Gaul, or Wellington in the Peninsular, it was because he had so complete a grasp of this chosen base of operations that he was able to come, to see, and to make his own, so swiftly and unfailingly elsewhere. Happy are those whose deep-rooted memories cling like his about some stable home! whose notion of the world around them has expanded from some prospect of happy tranquillity, instead of being drawn at random from the confusing city's roar! Happier still if that early picture be of one of those rare scenes which have inspired poets and prophets with the retrospective day-dream of a patriarchal, or a golden age; of some plot of ground like the Ithaca of Odysseus, *τρηχεῖ, ἀλλ' ἀλαθὴ κουροτρόφος*, "rough, but a nurse of *men*;" of some life like that which a poet of kindred spirit to Wordsworth's saw half in vision half in reality, among the husbandmen of the Italian hills:

> "Peace, peace is theirs, and life no fraud that knows,
> Wealth as they will, and when they will, repose:
> On many a hill the happy homesteads stand,
> The living lakes through many a vale expand;
> Cool glens are there, and shadowy caves divine,
> Deep sleep, and far-off voices of the kine—
> From moor to moor the exulting wild deer stray;
> The strenuous youth are strong and sound as they;
> One reverence still the untainted race inspires,
> God their first thought, and after God their sires;—
> These last discerned Astræa's flying hem,
> And Virtue's latest footsteps walked with them."

CHAPTER V.

MARRIAGE.—SOCIETY.—HIGHLAND TOUR.

WITH Wordsworth's settlement at Townend, Grasmere, in the closing days of the last century, the external events of his life may be said to come to an end. Even his marriage to Miss Mary Hutchinson, of Penrith, on October 4, 1802, was not so much an importation into his existence of new emotion, as a development and intensification of feelings which had long been there. This marriage was the crowning stroke of Wordsworth's felicity—the poetic recompense for his steady advocacy of all simple and noble things. When he wished to illustrate the true dignity and delicacy of rustic lives he was always accustomed to refer to the Cumbrian folk. And now it seemed that Cumberland requited him for his praises with her choicest boon; found for him in the country town of Penrith, and from the small and obscure circle of his connexions and acquaintance—nay, from the same dame's school in which he was taught to read—a wife such as neither rank nor young beauty nor glowing genius enabled his brother bards to win.

Mrs. Wordsworth's poetic appreciativeness, manifest to all who knew her, is attested by the poet's assertion that two of the best lines in the poem of *The Daffodils*—

> "They flash upon that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude"—

were of her composition. And in all other matters, from the highest to the lowest, she was to him a true helpmate, a companion "dearer far than life and light are dear," and able "in his steep march to uphold him to the end." Devoted to her husband, she nevertheless welcomed not only without jealousy but with delight the household companionship through life of the sister who formed so large an element in his being. Admiring the poet's genius to the full, and following the workings of his mind with a sympathy that never tired, she nevertheless was able to discern, and with unobtrusive care to hide or avert, those errors of manner into which retirement and self-absorption will betray even the gentlest spirit. It speaks, perhaps, equally well for Wordsworth's character that this tendency to a lengthy insistence, in general conversation, on his own feelings and ideas is the worst charge that can be

brought against him; and for Mrs. Wordsworth's, that her simple and rustic upbringing had gifted her with a manner so gracious and a tact so ready that in her presence all things could not but go well.

The life which the young couple led was one of primitive simplicity. In some respects it was even less luxurious than that of the peasants around them. They drank water, and ate the simplest fare. Miss Wordsworth had long rendered existence possible for her brother on the narrowest of means by her unselfish energy and skill in household management; and "plain living and high thinking" were equally congenial to the new inmate of the frugal home. Wordsworth gardened; and all together, or oftenest the poet and his sister, wandered almost daily over the neighbouring hills. Narrow means did not prevent them from offering a generous welcome to their few friends, especially Coleridge and his family, who repeatedly stayed for months under Wordsworth's roof. Miss Wordsworth's unpublished letters breathe the very spirit of hospitality in their näive details of the little sacrifices gladly made for the sake of the presence of these honoured guests. But for the most part their life was solitary and uneventful. Books they had few; neighbours almost none; and Miss Wordsworth's diary of these early years describes a life seldom paralleled in its intimate dependence on external nature. I take, almost at random, her account of a single day. "November 24, 1801. Read Chaucer. We walked by Gell's cottage. As we were going along we were stopped at once, at the distance, perhaps, of fifty yards from our favourite birch-tree; it was yielding to the gust of wind, with all its tender twigs; the sun shone upon it, and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape, with stem and branches; but it was like a spirit of water. After our return William read Spenser to us, and then walked to John's Grove. Went to meet W." And from an unpublished letter of Miss Wordsworth's, of about the same period (September 10, 1800), I extract her description of the new home. "We are daily more delighted with Grasmere and its neighbourhood. Our walks are perpetually varied, and we are more fond of the mountains as our acquaintance with them increases. We have a boat upon the lake, and a small orchard and smaller garden, which, as it is the work of our own hands, we regard with pride and partiality. Our cottage is quite large enough for us, though very small; and we have made it neat and comfortable within doors; and it looks very nice on the outside; for though the roses and honeysuckles which we have planted against it are only of this year's growth, yet it is covered all over with green leaves and scarlet flowers; for we have trained scarlet beans upon threads, which are not only exceedingly beautiful but very useful, as their produce is immense. We have made a lodging-room of the parlour below stairs, which has a stone floor, therefore we have covered it all over with matting. We sit in a room above stairs, and we have one lodging-room with two single beds, a sort of lumber-room, and a small, low, unceiled room, which

I have papered with newspapers, and in which we have put a small bed. Our servant is an old woman of sixty years of age, whom we took partly out of charity. She was very ignorant, very foolish, and very difficult to teach. But the goodness of her disposition, and the great convenience we should find if my perseverance was successful, induced me to go on."

The sonnets entitled *Personal Talk* give a vivid picture of the blessings of such seclusion. There are many minds which will echo the exclamation with which the poet dismisses his visitors and their gossip:

> "Better than such discourse doth silence long,
> Long barren silence, square with my desire;
> To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,
> In the loved presence of my cottage fire,
> And listen to the flapping of the flame,
> Or kettle whispering its faint undersong."

Many will look with envy on a life which has thus decisively cut itself loose from the world; which is secure from the influx of those preoccupations, at once distracting and nugatory, which deaden the mind to all other stimulus, and split the river of life into channels so minute that it loses itself in the sand.

> "Hence have I genial seasons; hence have I
> Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous thought.

Left to herself, the mind can expatiate in those kingdoms of the spirit bequeathed to us by past generations and distant men, which to the idle are but a garden of idleness, but to those who choose it become a true possession and an ever-widening home. Among those "nobler loves and nobler cares" there is excitement without reaction, there is an unwearied and impersonal joy—a joy which can only be held cheap because it is so abundant, and can only disappoint us through our own incapacity to contain it. These delights of study and of solitude Wordsworth enjoyed to the full. In no other poet, perhaps, have the poet's heightened sensibilities been productive of a pleasure so unmixed with pain. The wind of his emotions blew right abaft; he "swam smoothly in the stream of his nature, and lived but one man."

The blessing of meditative and lonely hours must of course be purchased by corresponding limitations. Wordsworth's conception of human character retained to the end an extreme simplicity. Many of life's most impressive phenomena were hid from his eyes. He never encountered any of those rare figures whose aspect seems to justify all traditions of pomp and pre-eminence when they appear amid stately scenes as with a natural sovereignty. He neither achieved nor underwent any of those experiences which can make all high romance seem a part of memory, and bestow, as it were, a password and introduction into the very innermost of human fates. On the other hand, he almost wholly escaped those sufferings which exceptional natures must needs derive from too

close a contact with this commonplace world. It was not his lot—as it has been the lot of so many poets—to move amongst mankind at once as an intimate and a stranger; to travel from disillusionment to disillusionment, and from regret to regret; to construct around him a world of ideal beings, who crumble into dust at his touch; to hope from them what they can neither understand nor accomplish, to lavish on them what they can never repay. Such pain, indeed, may become a discipline; and the close contact with many lives may teach to the poetic nature lessons of courage, of self-suppression, of resolute good-will, and may transform into an added dignity the tumult of emotions which might else have run riot in his heart. Yet it is less often from moods of self-control than from moods of self-abandonment that the fount of poetry springs; and herein it was that Wordsworth's especial felicity lay —that there was no one feeling in him which the world had either repressed or tainted; that he had no joy which might not be the harmless joy of all; and that, therefore, it was when he was most unreservedly himself that he was most profoundly human. All that was needful for him was to strike down into the deep of his heart. Or, using his own words, we may compare his tranquil existence to

> "A crystal river,
> Diaphanous because it travels slowly;"

and in which poetic thoughts rose unimpeded to the surface, like bubbles through the pellucid stream.

The first hint of many of his briefer poems is to be found in his sister's diary:

"*April* 15, 1802.—When we were in the woods below Gowbarrow Park we saw a few *daffodils* close to the water side. As we went along there were more, and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw there was a long belt of them along the shore. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about them; some rested their heads on the stones as on a pillow; the rest tossed, and reeled, and danced, and seemed as if they verily danced with the wind, they looked so gay and glancing."

"*July* 30, 1802.—Left London between five and six o'clock of the morning, outside the Dover coach. A beautiful morning. The city, St. Paul's, with the river, a multitude of little boats, made a beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge; the houses not overhung by their clouds of smoke, were spread out endlessly; yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a pure light, that there was something like the purity of one of nature's own grand spectacles. Arrived at Calais at four in the morning of July 31st. Delightful walks in the evenings, seeing far off in the west the coast of England like a cloud, crested with Dover Castle, the evening star, and the glory of the sky. The reflections in the water were more beautiful than the sky itself; purple waves brighter than precious stones for ever melting away upon the sands."

How simple are the elements of these delights! There is nothing here, except fraternal affection, a sunrise, a sunset, a flock

of bright wild flowers; and yet the sonnets on *Westminster Bridge* and *Calais Sands*, and the stanzas on the *Daffodils*, have taken their place among the permanent records of the profoundest human joy.

Another tour—this time through Scotland—undertaken in August, 1803, inspired Wordsworth with several of his best pieces. Miss Wordsworth's diary of this tour has been lately published, and should be familiar to all lovers of nature. The sister's journal is, indeed, the best introduction to the brother's poems. It has not—it cannot have—their dignity and beauty; but it exemplifies the same method of regarding Nature, the same self-identification with her subtler aspects and entrance into her profounder charm. It is interesting to notice how the same impression strikes both minds at once. From the sister's it is quickly reflected in words of exquisite delicacy and simplicity; in the brother's it germinates, and reappears, it may be months or years afterwards, as the nucleus of a mass of thought and feeling which has grown round it in his musing soul. The travellers' encounter with two Highland girls on the shore of Loch Lomond is a good instance of this. "One of the girls," writes Miss Wordsworth, "was exceedingly beautiful; and the figures of both of them, in gray plaids falling to their feet, their faces only being uncovered, excited our attention before we spoke to them; but they answered us so sweetly that we were quite delighted, at the same time that they stared at us with an innocent look of wonder. I think I never heard the English language sound more sweetly than from the mouth of the elder of these girls, while she stood at the gate answering our inquiries, her face flushed with the rain; her pronunciation was clear and distinct, without difficulty, yet slow, as if like a foreign speech."

> "A face with gladness overspread!
> Soft smiles, by human kindness bred!
> And seemliness complete, that sways
> Thy courtesies, about thee plays;
> With no restraint, but such as springs
> From quick and eager visitings
> Of thoughts that lie beyond the reach
> Of thy few words of English speech:
> A bondage sweetly brooked, a strife
> That gives thy gestures grace and life!
> So have I, not unmoved in mind,
> Seen birds of tempest-loving kind
> Thus beating up against the wind."

The travellers saw more of this girl, and Miss Wordsworth's opinion was confirmed. But to Wordsworth his glimpse of her became a veritable romance. He commemorated it in his poem of *The Highland Girl*, soon after his return from Scotland; he narrated it once more in his poem of *The Three Cottage Girls*, written nearly twenty years afterwards: and "the sort of prophecy," he says in 1843, "with which the verses conclude has, through God's

goodness, been realised; and now, approaching the close of my seventy-third year, I have a most vivid remembrance of her and the beautiful objects with which she was surrounded." Nay, more; he has elsewhere informed us, with some näiveté, that the first few lines of his exquisite poem to his wife, *She was a phantom of delight*, were originally composed as a description of this Highland maid, who would seem almost to have formed for him ever afterwards a kind of type and image of loveliness.

That such a meeting as this should have formed so long-remembered an incident in the poet's life will appear, perhaps, equally ridiculous to the philosopher and to the man of the world. The one would have given less, the other would have demanded more. And yet the quest of beauty, like the quest of truth, reaps its surest reward when it is disinterested as well as keen; and the true lover of human kind will often draw his most exquisite moments from what to most men seems but the shadow of a joy. Especially, as in this case, his heart will be prodigal of the impulses of that protecting tenderness which it is the blessing of early girlhood to draw forth unwittingly, and to enjoy unknown—affections which lead to no declaration, and desire no return; which are the spontaneous effluence of the very Spirit of Love in man; and which play and hover around winning innocence like the coruscations round the head of the unconscious Iulus, a soft and unassuming flame.

It was well, perhaps, that Wordsworth's romance should come to him in this remote and fleeting fashion. For to the Priest of Nature it was fitting that all things else should be harmonious, indeed, but accessory; that joy should not be so keen, nor sorrow so desolating, nor love itself so wildly strong, as to prevent him from going out upon the mountains with a heart at peace, and receiving "in a wise passiveness" the voices of earth and heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT.—DEATH OF JOHN WORDSWORTH.

THE year 1803 saw the beginning of a friendship which formed a valuable element in Wordsworth's life. Sir George Beaumont, of Coleorton Hall, Essex, a descendant of the dramatist, and representative of a family long distinguished for talent and culture, was staying with Coleridge at Greta Hall, Keswick, when, hearing of Coleridge's affection for Wordsworth, he was struck with the wish to bring Wordsworth also to Keswick, and bought and presented to him a beautiful piece of land at Applethwaite, under Skiddaw, in the hope that he might be induced to settle there. Coleridge was soon afterwards obliged to leave England in search of health, and the plan fell through. A characteristic letter of Wordsworth's records his feelings on the occasion. "Dear Sir George," he writes, "if any person were to be informed of the particulars of your kindness to me—if it were described to him in all its delicacy and nobleness—and he should afterwards be told that I suffered eight weeks to elapse without writing to you one word of thanks or acknowledgment, he would deem it a thing absolutely *impossible*. It is nevertheless true.

"Owing to a set of painful and uneasy sensations which I have, more or less, at all times about my chest, I deferred writing to you, being at first made still more uncomfortable by travelling, and loathing to do violence to myself in what ought to be an act of pure pleasure and enjoyment, viz., the expression of my deep sense of your goodness. This feeling was indeed so strong in me as to make me look upon the act of writing to you as a thing not to be done but in my best, my purest, and my happiest moments. Many of these I had, but then I had not my pen, ink, and paper before me, my conveniences, 'my appliances and means to boot;' all which, the moment that I thought of them, seemed to disturb and impair the sanctity of my pleasure. I contented myself with thinking over my complacent feelings, and breathing forth solitary gratulations and thanksgivings, which I did in many a sweet and many a wild place, during my late tour."

The friendship of which this act of delicate generosity was the beginning was maintained till Sir George Beaumont's death in 1827, and formed for many years Wordsworth's closest link with the world of art and culture. Sir George was himself a painter as well as a connoisseur, and his landscapes are not without indica-

tions of the strong feeling for nature which he undoubtedly possessed. Wordsworth, who had seen very few pictures, but was a penetrating critic of those which he knew, discerned this vein of true feeling in his friend's work, and has idealised a small landscape which Sir George had given him, in a sonnet which reproduces the sense of happy pause and voluntary fixation with which the mind throws itself into some scene where art has given

> "To one brief moment caught from fleeting time
> The appropriate calm of blest eternity."

There was another pursuit in which Sir George Beaumont was much interested, and in which painter and poet were well fitted to unite. The landscape-gardener, as Wordsworth says, should "work in the spirit of Nature, with an invisible hand of art." And he shows how any real success can only be achieved when the designer is willing to incorporate himself with the scenery around him; to postpone to its indications the promptings of his own pride or caprice; to interpret Nature to herself by completing touches; to correct her with deference, and, as it were, to caress her without importunity. And rising to that aspect of the question which connects it with human society, he is strenuous in condemnation of that taste, not so much for solitude as for isolation, which can tolerate no neighbourhood, and finds its only enjoyment in the sense of monopoly.

"Laying out grounds, as it is called, may be considered as a liberal art, in some sort like poetry and painting; its object ought to be to move the affections under the control of good-sense; and surely the affections of those who have the deepest perception of the beauty of Nature—who have the most valuable feelings, that is, the most permanent, the most independent, the most ennobling, connected with Nature and human life. No liberal art aims merely at the gratification of an individual or a class; the painter or poet is degraded in proportion as he does so. The true servants of the arts pay homage to the human-kind as impersonated in unwarped and enlightened minds. If this be so when we are merely putting together words or colours, how much more ought the feeling to prevail when we are in the midst of the realities of things; of the beauty and harmony, of the joy and happiness, of loving creatures; of men and children, of birds and beasts, of hills and streams, and trees and flowers; with the changes of night and day, evening and morning, summer and winter; and all their unwearied actions and energies, as benign in the spirit that animates them as they are beautiful and grand in that form of clothing which is given to them for the delight of our senses! What, then, shall we say of many great mansions, with their unqualified expulsion of human creatures from their neighbourhood, happy or not; houses which do what is fabledof the upas-tree—breathe out death and desolation! For my part, strip my neighbourhood of human beings, and I think it one of the greatest privations I could undergo. You have all the poverty of solitude, nothing of its elevation."

This passage is from a letter of Wordsworth's to Sir George Beaumont, who was engaged at the time in rebuilding and laying

out Coleorton. The poet himself planned and superintended some of these improvements, and wrote, for various points of interest in the grounds, inscriptions which form dignified examples of that kind of composition.

Nor was Sir George Beaumont the only friend whom the poet's taste assisted in the choice of a site or the disposition of pleasure-grounds. More than one seat in the Lake country—among them one home of pre-eminent beauty—have owed to Wordsworth no small part of their ordered charm. In this way, too, the poet is with us still: his presence has a strange reality as we look on some majestic prospect of interwinding lake and mountain which his design has made more beautifully visible to the children's children of those he loved; as we stand, perhaps, in some shadowed garden-ground where his will has had its way—has framed Helvellyn's far-off summit in an arch of tossing green, and embayed in towering forest-trees the long lawns of a silent valley—fit haunt for lofty aspiration and for brooding calm.

But of all woodland ways which Wordsworth's skill designed or his feet frequented, not one was dearer to him (if I may pass thus by a gentle transition to another of the strong affections of his life) than a narrow path through a firwood near his cottage, which "was known to the poet's household by the name of John's Grove." For in the year 1800 his brother, John Wordsworth, a few years younger than himself, and captain of an East Indiaman, had spent eight months in the poet's cottage at Grasmere. The two brothers had seen little of each other since childhood, and the poet had now the delight of discovering in the sailor a character congenial to his own, and an appreciation of poetry—and of the *Lyrical Ballads* especially—which was intense and delicate in an unusual degree. In both brothers, too, there was the same love of nature; and after John's departure, the poet pleased himself with imagining the visions of Grasmere which beguiled the watches of many a night at sea, or with tracing the pathway which the sailor's instinct had planned and trodden amid trees so thickly planted as to baffle a less practised skill. John Wordsworth, on the other hand, looked forward to Grasmere as the final goal of his wanderings, and intended to use his own savings to set the poet free from worldly cares.

Two more voyages the sailor made with such hopes as these, and amid a frequent interchange of books and letters with his brother at home. Then, in February, 1805, he set sail from Portsmouth, in command of the "Abergavenny" East Indiaman, bound for India and China. Through the incompetence of the pilot who was taking her out of the Channel, the ship struck on the Shambles off the Bill of Portland, on February 5, 1805. "She struck," says Wordsworth, "at 5 p.m. Guns were fired immediately, and were continued to be fired. She was gotten off the rock at half-past seven, but had taken in so much water, in spite of constant pumping, as to be water-logged. They had, however, hope that she might still be run upon Weymouth sands, and with this view

continued pumping and baling till eleven, when she went down. . . A few minutes before the ship went down my brother was seen talking to the first mate with apparent cheerfulness; and he was standing on the hen-coop, which is the point from which he could overlook the whole ship, the moment she went down—dying, as he had lived, in the very place and point where his duty stationed him."

"For myself," he continues elsewhere, "I feel that there is something cut out of my life which cannot be restored. I never thought of him but with hope and delight. We looked forward to the time, not distant, as we thought, when he would settle near us—when the task of his life would be over, and he would have nothing to do but reap his reward. By that time I hoped also that the chief part of my labours would be executed, and that I should be able to show him that he had not placed a false confidence in me. I never wrote a line without a thought of giving him pleasure; my writings, printed and manuscript, were his delight, and one of the chief solaces of his long voyages. But let me stop. I will not be cast down: were it only for his sake, I will not be dejected. I have much yet to do, and pray God to give me strength and power: his part of the agreement between us is brought to an end, mine continues; and I hope, when I shall be able to think of him with a calmer mind, that the remembrance of him dead will even animate me more than the joy which I had in him living."

In these and the following reflections there is nothing of novelty; yet there is an interest in the spectacle of this strong and simple mind confronted with the universal problems, and taking refuge in the thoughts which have satisfied, or scarcely satisfied, so many generations of mourning men.

"A thousand times have I asked myself, as your tender sympathy led me to do, 'Why was he taken away?' and I have answered the question as you have done. In fact, there is no other answer which can satisfy, and lay the mind at rest. Why have we a choice, and a will, and a notion of justice and injustice, enabling us to be moral agents? Why have we sympathies that make the best of us so afraid of inflicting pain and sorrow, which yet we see dealt about so lavishly by the Supreme Governor? Why should our notions of right towards each other, and to all sentient beings within our influence, differ so widely from what appears to be his notion and rule, *if everything were to end here?* Would it not be blasphemy to say that, upon the supposition of the thinking principle being *destroyed by death*, however inferior we may be to the great Cause and Ruler of things, we have *more of love* in our nature than he has? The thought is monstrous; and yet how to get rid of it except upon the supposition of *another* and a *better world*, I do not see."

From this calamity, as from all the lessons of life, Wordsworth drew all the benefit which it was empowered to bring. "A deep distress hath humanised my soul"—what lover of poetry does not

know the pathetic lines in which he bears witness to the teaching of sorrow? Other griefs, too, he had—the loss of two children in 1812; his sister's chronic illness, beginning in 1832; his daughter's death in 1847. All these he felt to the full; and yet, until his daughter's death, which was more than his failing energies could bear, these bereavements were but the thinly-scattered clouds "in a great sea of blue"—seasons of mourning here and there among years which never lost their hold on peace; which knew no shame and no remorse, no desolation and no fear: whose days were never long with weariness, nor their nights broken at the touch of woe. Even when we speak of his tribulations, it is his happiness which rises in our minds.

And inasmuch as this felicity is the great fact of Wordsworth's life—since his history is for the most part but the history of a halcyon calm—we find ourselves forced upon the question whether such a life is to be held desirable or no. Happiness with honour was the ideal of Solon; is it also ours? To the modern spirit—to the Christian, in whose ears counsels of perfection have left "a presence that is not to be put by," this question, at which a Greek would have smiled, is of no such easy solution.

To us, perhaps, in computing the fortune of any one whom we hold dear, it may seem more needful to enquire not whether he has had enough of joy, but whether he has had enough of sorrow; whether the blows of circumstance have wholly shaped his character from the rock; whether his soul has taken lustre and purity in the refiner's fire. Nor is it only (as some might say) for violent and faulty natures that sorrow is the best. It is true that by sorrow only can the headstrong and presumptuous spirit be shamed into gentleness and solemnised into humility. But sorrow is used also by the Power above us in cases where we men would have shrunk in horror from so rough a touch. Natures that were already of a heroic unselfishness, of a childlike purity, have been raised ere now by anguish upon anguish, woe after woe, to a height of holiness which we may believe that they could have reached by no other road. Why should it not be so? since there is no limit to the soul's possible elevation, why should her purifying trials have any assignable end? She is of a metal which can grow for ever brighter in the fiercening flame. And if, then, we would still pronounce the true Beatitudes not on the rejoicing, the satisfied, the highly-honoured, but after an ancient and sterner pattern, what account are we to give of Wordsworth's long years of blissful calm?

In the first place, we may say that his happiness was as wholly free from vulgar or transitory elements as a man's can be. It lay in a life which most men would have found austere and blank indeed; a life from which not Crœsus only but Solon would have turned in scorn; a life of poverty and retirement, of long apparent failure, and honour that came tardily at the close: it was a happiness nourished on no sacrifice of other men, on no eager appropriation of the goods of earth, but springing from a

single eye and a loving spirit, and wrought from those primary emotions which are the innocent birthright of all. And if it be answered that, however truly philosophic, however sacredly pure, his happiness may have been, yet its wisdom and its holiness were without an effort, and that it is effort which makes the philosopher and the saint: then we must use in answer his own Platonic scheme of things, to express a thought which we can but dimly apprehend; and we must say that, though progress be inevitably linked in our minds with struggle, yet neither do we conceive of struggle as without a pause; there must be prospect-places in the long ascent of souls; and the whole of this earthly life—this one existence, standing we know not where among the myriad that have been for us or shall be—may not be too much to occupy with one of those outlooks of vision and of prophecy, when

> "In a season of calm weather,
> Though inland far we be,
> Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither;
> Can in a moment travel thither,
> And see the children sport upon the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

CHAPTER VII.

"HAPPY WARRIOR," AND PATRIOTIC POEMS.

THE year 1805, which bereft Wordsworth of a beloved brother brought with it also another death, which was felt by the whole English nation like a private calamity. The emotion which Wordsworth felt at the news of Trafalgar—the way in which he managed to intertwine the memories of Nelson and of his own brother in his heart—may remind us fitly at this point of our story of the distress and perplexity of nations which for so many years surrounded the quiet Grasmere home, and of the strong responsive emotion with which the poet met each shock of European fates.

When England first took up arms against the French revolution, Wordsworth's feeling, as we have seen, had been one of unmixed sorrow and shame. Bloody and terrible as the revolution had become, it was still in some sort representative of human freedom; at any rate, it might still seem to contain possibilities of progress such as the retrograde despotisms with which England allied herself could never know. But the conditions of the contest changed before long. France had not the wisdom, the courage, the constancy to play to the end the part for which she had seemed chosen among the nations. It was her conduct towards Switzerland which decisively altered Wordsworth's view. He saw her valiant spirit of self-defence corrupted into lust of glory; her eagerness for the abolition of unjust privilege turned into a contentment with equality of degradation under a despot's heel. "One man, of men the meanest too"—for such the First Consul must needs appear to the moralist's eye—was

> "Raised up to sway the world—to do, undo;
> With mighty nations for his under'ings."

And history herself seemed vulgarised by the repetition of her ancient tales of war and overthrow on a scale of such apparent magnitude, but with no glamour of distance to hide the baseness of the agencies by which the destinies of Europe were shaped anew. This was an occasion that tried the hearts of men; it was not easy to remain through all those years at once undazzled and untempted, and never in the blackest hour to despair of human virtue.

In his tract on *The Convention of Cintra*, 1808, Wordsworth has given the fullest expression to this undaunted temper:

"Oppression, its own blind and predestined enemy, has poured this of blessedness upon Spain—that the enormity of the outrages of which she has been the victim has created an object of love and of hatred, of apprehensions and of wishes, adequate (if that be possible) to the utmost demands of human spirit. The heart that serves in this cause, if it languish, must languish from its own constitutional weakness, and not through want of nourishment from without. But it is a belief propagated in books, and which passes currently among talking men as part of their familiar wisdom, that the hearts of the many *are* constitutionally weak, that they *do* languish, and are slow to answer to the requisitions of things. I entreat those who are in this delusion to look behind them and about them for the evidence of experience. Now this, rightly understood, not only gives no support to any such belief, but proves that the truth is in direct opposition to it. The history of all ages—tumults after tumults, wars foreign or civil, with short or with no breathing-places from generation to generation; the senseless weaving and interweaving of factions, vanishing, and reviving, and piercing each other like the Northern Lights; public commotions and those in the breast of the individual; the long calenture to which the Lover is subject; the blast, like the blast of the desert, which sweeps perennially through a frightful solitude of its own making in the mind of the Gamester; the slowly quickening, but ever quickening, descent of appetite down which the Miser is propelled; the agony, and cleaving oppression of grief; the ghost-like hauntings of shame; the incubus of revenge; the life-distemper of ambition . . . these demonstrate incontestably that the passions of men (I mean the soul of sensibility in the heart of man), in all quarrels, in all contests, in all quests, in all delights, in all employments which are either sought by men or thrust upon them, do immeasurably transcend their objects. The true sorrow of humanity consists in this—not that the mind of man fails, but that the cause and demands of action and of life so rarely correspond with the dignity and intensity of human desires; and hence, that which is slow to languish is too easily turned aside and abused. But, with the remembrance of what has been done, and in the face of the interminable evils which are threatened, a Spaniard can never have cause to complain of this while a follower of the tyrant remains in arms upon the Peninsula."

It was passages such as this, perhaps, which led Canning to declare that Wordsworth's pamphlet was the finest piece of political eloquence which had appeared since Burke. And yet if we compare it with Burke, or with the great Greek exemplar of all those who would give speech the cogency of act—we see at once the causes of its practical failure. In Demosthenes the thoughts and principles are often as lofty as any patriot can express; but their loftiness, in his speech, as in the very truth of things, seemed but to add to their immediate reality. They were beaten and inwoven into the facts of the hour: action seemed to turn on them as on its only possible pivot; it was as though Virtue and Freedom hung armed in heaven above the assembly, and in the visible likeness of immortal ancestors beckoned upon an urgent way. Wordsworth's mood of mind, on the other hand, as he has depicted it in two son-

nets written at the same time as his tract, explains why it was that that appeal was rather a solemn protest than an effective exhortation. In the first sonnet he describes the surroundings of his task —the dark wood and rocky cave, "the hollow vale which foaming torrents fill with omnipresent murmur:"

> "Here mighty Nature! in this school sublime
> I weigh the hopes and fears of suffering Spain;
> For her consult the auguries of time,
> And through the human heart explore my way,
> And look and listen, gathering whence I may
> Triumph, and thoughts no bondage can restrain."

And then he proceeds to conjecture what effect his tract will produce:

> "I dropped my pen, and listened to the wind,
> That sang of trees uptorn and vessels tost
> A midnight harmony, and wholly lost
> To the general sense of men, by chains confined
> Of business, care, or pleasure,—or resigned
> To timely sleep. Thought I, the impassioned train
> Without which aid of numbers I sustain
> Like acceptation from the world will find."

This deliberate and lonely emotion was fitter to inspire grave poetry than a pamphlet appealing to an immediate crisis. And the sonnets dedicated *To Liberty* (1802–16) are the outcome of many moods like these.

It is little to say of these sonnets that they are the most permanent record in our literature of the Napoleonic war. For that distinction they have few competitors. Two magnificent songs of Campbell's, an ode of Coleridge's, a few spirited stanzas of Byron's —strangely enough there is little besides these that lives in the national memory, till we come to the ode which summed up the long contest a generation later, when its great captain passed away. But these *Sonnets to Liberty* are worthy of comparison with the noblest passages of patriotic verse or prose which all our history has inspired—the passages where Shakspeare brings his rays to focus on "this earth, this realm, this England"—or where the dread of national dishonour has kindled Chatham to an iron glow—or where Milton rises from the polemic into the prophet, and Burke from the partisan into the philosopher. The armoury of Wordsworth, indeed, was not forged with the same fire as that of these "invincible knights of old." He had not swayed senates, nor directed policies, nor gathered into one ardent bosom all the spirit of a heroic age. But he had deeply felt what it is that makes the greatness of nations; in that extremity no man was more staunch than he; no man more unwaveringly disdained unrighteous empire, or kept the might of moral forces more steadfastly in view. Not Stein could place a manlier reliance on "a few strong instincts and a few plain rules;" not Fichte could invoke more convincingly he "great allies" which work with "Man's unconquerable mind."

Here and there, indeed, throughout these sonnets are scattered strokes of high poetic admiration or scorn which could hardly be overmatched in Æschylus. Such is the indignant correction—

> "Call not the royal Swede unfortunate,
> Who never did to Fortune bend the knee!"

or the stern touch which closes a description of Flamininus's proclamation at the Isthmian games, according liberty to Greece—

> "A gift of that which is not to be given
> By all the blended powers of Earth and Heaven!"

Space forbids me to dwell in detail on these noble poems—on the well-known sonnets to Venice, to Milton, &c.; on the generous tributes to the heroes of the contest—Schill, Hoffer, Toussaint, Palafox; or on the series which contrast the instinctive greatness of the Spanish people at bay with Napoleon's lying promises and inhuman pride. But if Napoleon's career afforded to Wordsworth a poetic example, impressive as that of Xerxes to the Greeks, of lawless and intoxicated power, there was need of some contrasted figure more notable than Hoffer or Palafox from which to draw the lessons which great contests can teach of unselfish valour. Was there then any man, by land or sea, who might serve as the poet's type of the ideal hero? To an Englishman, at least, this question carries its own reply. For by a singular destiny England, with a thousand years of noble history behind her, has chosen for her best-beloved, for her national hero, not an Arminius from the age of legend, not a Henri Quatre from the age of chivalry, but a man whom men still living have seen and known. For, indeed, England and all the world as to this man were of one accord; and when in victory, on his ship *Victory*, Nelson passed away, the thrill which shook mankind was of a nature such as perhaps was never felt at any other death—so unanimous was the feeling of friends and foes that earth had lost her crowning example of impassioned self-devotedness and of heroic honour.

And yet it might have seemed that between Nelson's nature and Wordsworth's there was little in common. The obvious limitations of the great Admiral's culture and character were likely to be strongly felt by the philosophic poet. And a serious crime, of which Nelson was commonly, though, as now appears, erroneously,* supposed to be guilty, was sure to be judged by Wordsworth with great severity.

Wordsworth was, in fact, hampered by some such feelings of disapproval. He even tells us, with that näive affectionateness which often makes us smile, that he has had recourse to the character of his own brother John for the qualities in which the great

* The researches of Sir Nicholas Nicolas (*Letters and Despatches of Lord Nelson*, vol. vii., Appendix) have placed Lord Nelson's connexion with Lady Hamilton in an unexpected light.

Admiral appeared to him to have been deficient. But on these hesitations it would be unjust to dwell. I mention them only to bring out the fact that between these two men, so different in outward fates—between "the adored, the incomparable Nelson" and the homely poet, "retired as noontide dew"—there was a moral likeness so profound that the ideal of the recluse was realised in the public life of the hero, and, on the other hand, the hero himself is only seen as completely heroic when his impetuous life stands out for us from the solemn background of the poet's calm. And surely these two natures taken together make the perfect Englishman. Nor is there any portrait fitter than that of *The Happy Warrior* to go forth to all lands as representing the English character at its height—a figure not ill-matching with "Plutarch's men."

For indeed this short poem is in itself a manual of greatness; there is a Roman majesty in its simple and weighty speech. And what eulogy was ever nobler than that passage where, without definite allusion or quoted name, the poet depicts, as it were, the very summit of glory in the well-remembered aspect of the Admiral in his last and greatest hour?

> "Whose powers shed round him, in the common strife,
> Or mild concerns of ordinary life,
> A constant influence, a peculiar grace;
> But who, if he be called upon to face
> Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined
> Great issues, good or bad for human kind,
> *Is happy as a Lover, and attired*
> *With sudden brightness, like a Man inspired.*"

Or again, where the hidden thought of Nelson's womanly tenderness, of his constant craving for the green earth and home affections in the midst of storm and war, melts the stern verses into a sudden change of tone:

> "He who, though thus endued as with a sense
> And faculty for storm and turbulence,
> *Is yet a Soul whose master-bias leans*
> *To home-felt pleasures and to gentle scenes;*
> Sweet images! which, wheresoe'er he be,
> Are at his heart; and such fidelity
> It is his darling passion to approve:—
> More brave for this, that he hath much to love."

Compare with this the end of the *Song at Brougham Castle*, where, at the words "alas! the fervent harper did not know—" the strain changes from the very spirit of chivalry to the gentleness of nature's calm. Nothing can be more characteristic of Wordsworth than contrasts like this. They teach us to remember that his accustomed mildness is the fruit of no indolent or sentimental peace; and that, on the other hand, when his counsels are

sternest, and "his voice is still for war," this is no voice of hardness or of vainglory, but the reluctant resolution of a heart which fain would yield itself to other energies, and have no message but of love.

There is one more point in which the character of Nelson has fallen in with one of the lessons which Wordsworth is never tired of enforcing, the lesson that virtue grows by the strenuousness of its exercise, that it gains strength as it wrestles with pain and difficulty, and converts the shocks of circumstance into an energy of its proper glow. The Happy Warrior is one,

> "Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,
> And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train!
> Turns his necessity to glorious gain;
> In face of these doth exercise a power
> Which is our human nature's highest dower;
> Controls them and subdues, transmutes, bereaves
> Of their bad influence, and their good receives;
> By objects which might force the soul to abate
> Her feeling, rendered more compassionate;"

and so further, in words which recall the womanly tenderness, the almost exaggerated feeling for others' pain, which showed itself memorably in face of the blazing *Orient*, and in the harbour at Teneriffe, and in the cockpit at Trafalgar.

In such lessons as these—such lessons as *The Happy Warrior* or the Patriotic Sonnets teach—there is, of course, little that is absolutely novel. We were already aware that the ideal hero should be as gentle as he is brave, that he should act always from the highest motives, nor greatly care for any reward save the consciousness of having done his duty. We were aware that the true strength of a nation is moral, and not material; that dominion which rests on mere military force is destined quickly to decay; that the tyrant, however admired and prosperous, is in reality despicable, and miserable, and alone; that the true man should face death itself rather than parley with dishonour. These truths are *admitted* in all ages; yet it is scarcely stretching language to say that they are *known* to but few men. Or at least, though in a great nation there be many who will act on them instinctively, and approve them by a self-surrendering faith, there are few who can so put them forth in speech as to bring them home with a fresh conviction and an added glow; who can sum up, like Æschylus, the contrast between Hellenic freedom and barbarian despotism in "one trump's peal that set all Greeks aflame;" can thrill, like Virgil, a world-wide empire with the recital of the august simplicities of early Rome.

To those who would know these things with a vital knowledge—a conviction which would remain unshaken were the whole world in arms for wrong—it is before all things necessary to strengthen the inner monitions by the companionship of these noble souls. And if a poet, by strong concentration of thought, by striving in

all things along the upward way, can leave us in a few pages, as it were, a summary of patriotism, a manual of national honour, he surely has his place among his country's benefactors not only by that kind of courtesy which the nation extends to men of letters of whom her masses take little heed, but with a title as assured as any warrior or statesman, and with no less direct a claim.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHILDREN.—LIFE AT RYDAL MOUNT.—"THE EXCURSION."

It may be well at this point to return to the quiet chronicle of the poet's life at Grasmere; where his cottage was becoming too small for an increasing family. His eldest son, John, was born in 1803; his eldest daughter, Dorothy or Dora, in 1804. Then came Thomas, born 1806; and Catherine, born 1808; and the list is ended by William, born 1810, and now (1880) the only survivor. In the spring of 1808 Wordsworth left Townend for Allan Bank—a more roomy but an uncomfortable house, at the north end of Grasmere. From thence he removed for a time, in 1811, to the Parsonage at Grasmere.

Wordsworth was the most affectionate of fathers, and allusions to his children occur frequently in his poetry. Dora—who was the delight of his later years—has been described at length in *The Triad*. Shorter and simpler, but more completely successful, is the picture of Catherine in the little poem which begins "Loving she is, and tractable, though wild," with its homely simile for childhood—its own existence sufficient to fill it with gladness:

> "As a faggot sparkles on the hearth
> Not less if unattended and alone
> Than when both young and old sit gathered round
> And take delight in its activity."

The next notice of this beloved child is in the sonnet, "Surprised by joy, impatient as the wind," written when she had already been removed from his side. She died in 1812, and was closely followed by her brother Thomas. Wordsworth's grief for these children was profound, violent, and lasting, to an extent which those who imagine him as not only calm but passionless might have some difficulty in believing. "Referring once," says his friend Mr. Aubrey de Vere, "to two young children of his who had died about *forty years* previously, he described the details of their illnesses with an exactness and an impetuosity of troubled excitement such as might have been expected if the bereavement had taken place but a few weeks before. The lapse of time seemed to have left the sorrow submerged indeed, but still in all its first freshness. Yet I afterwards heard that at the time of the illness, at least in the case of one of the two children, it was impossible to rouse his attention

to the danger. He chanced to be then under the immediate spell of one of those fits of poetical inspiration which descended on him like a cloud. Till the cloud had drifted, he could see nothing beyond."

This anecdote illustrates the fact, which to those who knew Wordsworth well was sufficiently obvious, that the characteristic calm of his writings was the result of no coldness of temperament, but of a deliberate philosophy. The pregnant force of his language in dealing with those dearest to him—his wife, his sister, his brother—is proof enough of this. The frequent allusions in his correspondence to the physical exhaustion brought on by the act of poetical composition indicate a frame which, though made robust by exercise and temperance, was by nature excitable rather than strong. And even in the direction in which we should least have expected it, there is reason to believe that there were capacities of feeling in him which never broke from his control. "Had I been a writer of love-poetry," he is reported to have said, "it would have been natural to me to write it with a degree of warmth which could hardly have been approved by my principles, and which might have been undesirable for the reader."

Wordsworth's paternal feelings, at any rate, were, as has been said, exceptionally strong; and the impossibility of remaining in a house filled with sorrowful memories rendered him doubly anxious to obtain a permanent home. "The house which I have for some time occupied," he writes to Lord Lonsdale, in January, 1813, "is the Parsonage of Grasmere. It stands close by the churchyard, and I have found it absolutely necessary that we should quit a place which, by recalling to our minds at every moment the losses we have sustained in the course of the last year, would grievously retard our progress towards that tranquillity which it is our duty to aim at." It happened that Rydal Mount became vacant at this moment, and in the spring of 1813 the Wordsworths migrated to this their favourite and last abode.

Rydal Mount has probably been oftener described than any other English poet's home since Shakspeare; and few homes, certainly, have been moulded into such close accordance with their inmates' nature. The house, which has been altered since Wordsworth's day, stands, looking southward, on the rocky side of Nab Scar, above Rydal Lake. The garden was described by Bishop Wordsworth immediately after his uncle's death, while every terrace-walk and flowering alley spoke of the poet's loving care. He tells of the "tall ash-tree, in which a thrush has sung, for hours together, during many years;" of the "laburnum in which the osier cage of the doves was hung;" of the stone steps "in the interstices of which grow the yellow flowering poppy, and the wild geranium or Poor Robin"—

> "Gay
> With his red stalks upon a sunny day."

And then of the terraces—one levelled for Miss Fenwick's use, and

welcome to himself in aged years; and one ascending, and leading to the "far terrace" on the mountain's side, where the poet was wont to murmur his verses as they came. Within the house were disposed his simple treasures: the ancestral almery, on which the names of unknown Wordsworths may be deciphered still; Sir George Beaumont's pictures of "The White Doe of Rylstone" and "The Thorn," and the cuckoo clock which brought vernal thoughts to cheer the sleepless bed of age, and which sounded its noonday summons when his spirit fled.

Wordsworth's worldly fortunes, as if by some benignant guardianship of Providence, were at all times proportioned to his successive needs. About the date of his removal to Rydal (in March, 1813) he was appointed, through Lord Lonsdale's interest, to the distributorship of stamps for the county of Westmoreland, to which office the same post for Cumberland was afterwards added. He held this post till August, 1842, when he resigned it without a retiring pension, and it was conferred on his second son. He was allowed to reside at Rydal, which was counted as a suburb of Ambleside; and as the duties of the place were light, and mainly performed by a most competent and devoted clerk, there was no drawback to the advantage of an increase of income which released him from anxiety as to the future. A more lucrative office—the collectorship of Whitehaven—was subsequently offered to him; but he declined it, "nor would exchange his Sabine valley for riches and a load of care."

Though Wordsworth's life at Rydal was a retired one, it was not that of a recluse. As years went on he became more and more recognized as a centre of spiritual strength and illumination, and was sought not only by those who were already his neighbours, but by some who became so mainly for his sake. Southey at Keswick was a valued friend, though Wordsworth did not greatly esteem him as a poet. De Quincey, originally attracted to the district by admiration for Wordsworth, remained there for many years, and poured forth a criticism strangely compounded of the utterances of the hero-worshipper and the *valet-de-chambre*. Professor Wilson, of the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, never showed, perhaps, to so much advantage as when he walked by the side of the master whose greatness he was one of the first to detect. Dr. Arnold of Rugby made the neighbouring home at Fox How a focus of warm affections and of intellectual life. And Hartley Coleridge, whose fairy childhood had inspired one of Wordsworth's happiest pieces, continued to lead among the dales of Westmoreland a life which showed how much of genius and goodness a single weakness can nullify.

Other friends there were, too, less known to fame, but of exceptional powers of appreciation and sympathy. The names of Mrs. Fletcher and her daughters, Lady Richardson and Mrs. Davy, should not be omitted in any record of the poet's life at Rydal. And many humbler neighbours may be recognised in the characters of the *Excursion* and other poems. The *Wanderer*, indeed, is a picture of Wordsworth himself—"an idea," as he says, "of what

I fancied my own character might have become in his circumstances." But the *Solitary* was suggested by a broken man who took refuge in Grasmere from the world in which he had found no peace; and the characters described as lying in the churchyard among the mountains are almost all of them portraits. The clergyman and his family described in Book VII. were among the poet's principal associates in the vale of Grasmere. "There was much talent in the family," says Wordsworth, in the memoranda dictated to Miss Fenwick; "and the eldest son was distinguished for poetical talent, of which a specimen is given in my Notes to the *Sonnets on the Duddon*. Once when, in our cottage at Townend, I was talking with him about poetry in the course of our conversation I presumed to find fault with the versification of Pope, of whom he was an enthusiastic admirer. He defended him with a warmth that indicated much irritation; nevertheless, I could not abandon my point, and said, 'In compass and variety of sound your own versification surpasses his.' Never shall I forget the change of his countenance and tone of voice. The storm was laid in a moment; he no longer disputed my judgment; and I passed immediately in his mind, no doubt, for as great a critic as ever lived."

It was with personages simple and unromantic as these that Wordsworth filled the canvas of his longest poem. Judged by ordinary standards the *Excursion* appears an epic without action, and with two heroes, the Pastor and the Wanderer, whose characters are identical. Its form is cumbrous in the extreme, and large tracts of it have little claim to the name of poetry. Wordsworth compares the *Excursion* to a temple of which his smaller poems form subsidiary shrines; but the reader will more often liken the small poems to gems, and the *Excursion* to the rock from which they were extracted. The long poem contains, indeed, magnificent passages, but as a whole it is a diffused description of scenery which the poet has elsewhere caught in brighter glimpses; a diffused statement of hopes and beliefs which have crystallized more exquisitely elsewhere round moments of inspiring emotion. The *Excursion*, in short, has the drawbacks of a didactic poem as compared with lyrical poems; but, judged as a didactic poem, it has the advantage of containing teaching of true and permanent value.

I shall not attempt to deduce a settled scheme of philosophy from these discourses among the mountains. I would urge only that, as a guide to conduct, Wordsworth's precepts are not in themselves either unintelligible or visionary. For whereas some moralists would have us amend Nature, and others bid us follow her, there is apt to be something impracticable in the first maxim, and something vague in the second. Asceticism, quietism, enthusiasm, ecstasy—all systems which imply an unnatural repression or an unnatural excitation of our faculties—are ill-suited for the mass of mankind. And on the other hand, if we are told to follow nature, to develop our original character, we are too often in doubt as to which of our conflicting instincts to follow, what part of our complex nature to accept as our regulating self. But Words-

worth, while impressing on us conformity to nature as the rule of life, suggests a text of such conformity which can be practically applied. "The child is father of the man"—in the words which stand as introduction to his poetical works, and Wordsworth holds that the instincts and pleasures of a healthy childhood sufficiently indicate the lines on which our maturer character should be formed. The joy which began in the mere sense of existence should be maintained by hopeful faith; the simplicity which began in inexperience should be recovered by meditation; the love which originated in the family circle should expand itself over the race of men. And the calming and elevating influence of Nature—which to Wordsworth's memory seemed the inseparable concomitant of childish years—should be constantly invoked throughout life to keep the heart fresh and the eyes open to the mysteries discernible through her radiant veil. In a word, the family affections, if duly fostered, the influences of Nature, if duly sought, with some knowledge of the best books, are material enough to "build up our moral being" and to outweigh the less deep-seated impulses which prompt to wrong-doing.

If, then, surrounding influences make so decisive a difference in man's moral lot, what are we to say of those who never had the chance of receiving those influences aright; who are reared, with little parental supervision, in smoky cities, and spend their lives in confined and monotonous labour? One of the most impressive passages in the *Excursion* is an indignant complaint of the injustice thus done to the factory child. Wordsworth was no fanatical opponent of manufacturing industry. He had intimate friends among manufacturers; and in one of his letters he speaks of promising himself much pleasure from witnessing the increased regard for the welfare of factory hands of which one of these friends had set the example. But he never lost sight of the fact that the life of the mill-hand is an anomaly—is a life not in the order of nature, and which requires to be justified by manifest necessity and by continuous care. The question to what extent we may acquiesce in the continuance of a low order of human beings, existing for our enjoyment rather than for their own, may be answered with plausibility in very different tones; from the Communist who cannot acquiesce in the inferiority of any man's position to any other's, to the philosopher who holds that mankind has made the most eminent progress when a few chosen individuals have been supported in easy brilliancy by a population of serfs or slaves. Wordsworth's answer to this question is at once conservative and philanthropic. He holds to the distinction of classes, and thus admits a difference in the fulness and value of human lots. But he will not consent to any social arrangement which implies a necessary *moral* inferiority in any section of the body politic; and he esteems it the statesman's first duty to provide that all citizens shall be placed under conditions of life which, however humble, shall not be unfavourable to virtue.

His views on national education, which at first sight appear so

inconsistent, depend on the same conception of national welfare. Wordsworth was one of the earliest and most emphatic proclaimers of the duty of the State in this respect. The lines in which he insists that every child ought to be taught to read are, indeed, often quoted as an example of the moralising baldness of much of his blank verse. But, on the other hand, when a great impulse was given to education (1820–30) by Bell and Lancaster, by the introduction of what was called the "Madras system" of tuition by pupil-teachers, and the spread of infant schools, Wordsworth was found unexpectedly in the opposite camp. Considering as he did all mental requirements as entirely subsidiary to moral progress, and in themselves of very little value, he objected to a system which, instead of confining itself to reading—that indispensable channel of moral nutriment—aimed at communicating knowledge as varied and advanced as time and funds would allow. He objected to the dissociation of school and home life—to that relegation of domestic interests and duties to the background, which large and highly-organised schools, and teachers much above the home level, must necessarily involve. And yet more strongly, and as it may still seem to many minds, with convincing reason, he objected to an eleemosynary system, which "precludes the poor mother from the strongest motive human nature can be actuated by for industry, for forethought, and self-denial." "The Spartan," he said, "and other ancient communities, might disregard domestic ties, because they had the substitution of country, which we cannot have. Our course is to supplant domestic attachments, without the possibility of substituting others more capacious. What can grow out of it but selfishness?" The half-century which has elapsed since Wordsworth wrote these words has evidently altered the state of the question. It has impressed on us the paramount necessity of national education, for reasons political and social too well known to repeat. But it may be feared that it has also shifted the incidence of Wordsworth's arguments in a more sinister manner, by vastly increasing the number of those homes where domestic influence of the kind which the poet saw around him at Rydal is altogether wanting, and school is the best avenue even to moral well-being. "Heaven and hell," he writes in 1808, "are scarcely more different from each other than Sheffield and Manchester, &c., differ from the plains and valleys of Surrey, Essex, Cumberland, or Westmoreland." It is to be feared, indeed, that even "the plains and valleys of Surrey and Essex" contain many cottages whose spiritual and sanitary conditions fall far short of the poet's ideal. But it is of course in the great and growing centres of population that the dangers which he dreads have come upon us in their most aggravated form. And so long as there are in England so many homes to which parental care and the influences of nature are alike unknown, no protest in favour of the paramount importance of these primary agencies in the formation of character can be regarded as altogether out of date.

With such severe and almost prosaic themes is the greater part

of the *Excursion* occupied. Yet the poem is far from being composed throughout in a prosaic spirit. "Of its bones is coral made;" its arguments and theories have lain long in Wordsworth's mind, and have accreted to themselves a rich investiture of observation and feeling. Some of its passages rank among the poet's highest flights. Such is the passage in Book I. describing the boy's rapture at sunrise; and a picture of a sunset at the close of the same book. Such is the opening of Book IV.; and the passage describing the wild joy of roaming through a mountain storm; and the metaphor in the same book which compares the mind's power of transfiguring the obstacles which beset her, with the glory into which the moon incorporates the umbrage that would intercept her beams.

It would scarcely be possible at the present day that a work containing such striking passages, and so much of substance and elevation—however out of keeping it might be with the ruling taste of the day—should appear without receiving careful study from many quarters and warm appreciation in some recognised organs of opinion. Criticism in Wordsworth's day was both less competent and less conscientious, and the famous "this will never do" of Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review* was by no means an extreme specimen of the general tone in which the work was received. The judgment of the reviewers influenced popular taste; and the book was as decided a pecuniary failure as Wordsworth's previous ventures had been.

And here, perhaps, is a fit occasion to speak of that strangely violent detraction and abuse which formed so large an ingredient in Wordsworth's life—or, rather, of that which is the only element of permanent interest in such a matter—his manner of receiving and replying to it. No writer, probably, who has afterwards achieved a reputation at all like Wordsworth's, has been so long represented by reviewers as purely ridiculous. And in Wordsworth's manner of acceptance of this fact we may discern all the strength, and something of the stiffness, of his nature; we may recognize an almost, but not quite, ideal attitude under the shafts of unmerited obloquy. For he who thus is arrogantly censured should remember both the dignity and the frailty of man; he should wholly forgive, and almost wholly forget; but, nevertheless, should retain such serviceable hints as almost any criticism, however harsh or reckless, can afford, and go on his way with no bitter broodings, but yet (to use Wordsworth's expression in another context) "with a melancholy in the soul, a sinking inward into ourselves from thought to thought, a steady remonstrance, and a high resolve."

How far his own self-assertion may becomingly be carried in reply, is another and a delicate question. There is almost necessarily something distasteful to us not only in self-praise but even in a thorough self-appreciation. We desire of the ideal character that his faculties of admiration should be, as it were, absorbed in an eager perception of the merits of others—that a kind of shrinking delicacy should prevent him from appraising his own achieve-

ments with a similar care. Often, indeed, there is something most winning in a touch of humourous blindness: "Well, Miss Sophia, and how do *you* like the *Lady of the Lake?*" "Oh, I've not read it: papa says there's nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry."

But there are circumstances under which this graceful absence of self-consciousness can no longer be maintained. When a man believes that he has a message to deliver that vitally concerns mankind, and when that message is received with contempt and apathy, he is necessarily driven back upon himself; he is forced to consider whether what he has to say is after all so important, and whether his mode of saying it be right and adequate. A necessity of this kind was forced upon both Shelley and Wordsworth. Shelley—the very type of self-forgetful enthusiasm—was driven at last by the world's treatment of him into a series of moods sometimes bitter and sometimes self-distrustful—into a sense of aloofness and detachment from the mass of men, which the poet who would fain improve and exalt them should do his utmost not to feel. On Wordsworth's more stubborn nature the effect produced by many years of detraction was of a different kind. Naturally introspective, he was driven by abuse and ridicule into taking stock of himself more frequently and more laboriously than ever. He formed an estimate of himself and his writings which was, on the whole (as will now be generally admitted), a just one; and this view he expressed when occasion offered—in sober language, indeed, but with calm conviction, and with precisely the same air of speaking from undoubted knowledge as when he described the beauty of Cumbrian mountains or the virtue of Cumbrian homes.

"It is impossible," he wrote to Lady Beaumont in 1807, "that any expectations can be lower than mine concerning the immediate effect of this little work upon what is called the public. I do not here take into consideration the envy and malevolence, and all the bad passions which always stand in the way of a work of any merit from a living poet; but merely think of the pure, absolute, honest ignorance in which all worldlings, of every rank and situation, must be enveloped, with respect to the thoughts, feelings, and images on which the life of my poems depends. The things which I have taken, whether from within or without, what have they to do with routs, dinners, morning calls, hurry from door to door, from street to street, on foot or in carriage; with Mr. Pitt or Mr. Fox, Mr. Paul or Sir Francis Burdett, the Westminster election or the borough of Honiton? In a word—for I cannot stop to make my way through the hurry of images that present themselves to me—what have they to do with endless talking about things that nobody cares anything for, except as far as their own vanity is concerned, and this with persons they care nothing for, but as their vanity or *selfishness* is concerned? What have they to do (to say all at once) with a life without love? In such a life there can be no thought: for we have no thought (save thoughts of pain), but as far as we have love and admiration.

"It is an awful truth, that there neither is nor can be any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world—among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society. This is a truth, and an awful one; because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God.

"Upon this I shall insist elsewhere; at present let me confine myself to my object, which is to make you, my dear friend, as easy-hearted as myself with respect to these poems. Trouble not yourself upon their present reception. Of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny?—to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous; this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves."

Such words as these come with dignity from the mouth of a man like Wordsworth when he has been, as it were, driven to bay—when he is consoling an intimate friend, distressed at the torrent of ridicule which, as she fears, must sweep his self-confidence and his purposes away. He may be permitted to assure her that "my ears are stone-dead to this idle buzz, and my flesh as insensible as iron to these petty stings, and to accompany his assurance with a reasoned statement of the grounds of his unshaken hopes.

We feel, however, that such an expression of self-reliance on the part of a great man should be accompanied with some proof that no conceit or impatience is mixed with his steadfast calm. If he believes the public to be really unable to appreciate himself, he must show no surprise when they admire his inferiors; he must remember that the case would be far worse if they admired no one at all. Nor must he descend from his own unpopular merits on the plea that after catching the public attention by what is bad he will retain it for what is good. If he is so sure that he is in the right he can afford to wait and let the world come round to him. Wordsworth's conduct satisfies both these tests. It is, indeed, curious to observe how much abuse this inoffensive recluse received, and how absolutely he avoided returning it. Byron, for instance, must have seemed in his eyes guilty of something far more injurious to mankind than "a drowsy, frowsy poem, called the *Excursion*," could possibly appear. But, except in one or two private letters, Wordsworth has never alluded to Byron at all. Shelley's lampoon—a singular instance of the random blows of a noble spirit, striking at what, if better understood, it would eagerly have revered—Wordsworth seems never to have read. Nor did the violent attacks of the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly Reviews* provoke him to any rejoinder. To "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers"—leagued against him as their common prey—he op-

posed a dignified silence; and the only moral injury which he derived from their assaults lay in that sense of the absence of trustworthy external criticism which led him to treat everything which he had once written down as if it were a special revelation, and to insist with equal earnestness on his most trifling as on his most important pieces—on *Goody Blake* and *The Idiot Boy* as on *The Cuckoo* or *The Daffodils*. The sense of humour is apt to be the first grace which is lost under persecution; and much of Wordsworth's heaviness and stiff exposition of commonplaces is to be traced to a feeling which he could scarcely avoid, that "all day long he had lifted up his voice to a perverse and gainsaying generation."

To the pecuniary loss inflicted on him by these adverse criticisms he was justly sensible. He was far from expecting, or even desiring, to be widely popular or to make a rapid fortune; but he felt that the labourer was worthy of his hire, and that the devotion of years to literature should have been met with some moderate degree of the usual form of recognition which the world accords to those who work for it. In 1820 he speaks of "the whole of my returns from the writing trade not amounting to seven-score pounds;" and as late as 1843, when at the height of his fame, he was not ashamed of confessing the importance which he had always attached to this particular.

"So sensible am I," he says, "of the deficiencies in all that I write, and so far does everything that I attempt fall short of what I wish it to be, that even private publication, if such a term may be allowed, requires more resolution than I can command. I have written to give vent to my own mind, and not without hope that, some time or other, kindred minds might benefit by my labours; but I am inclined to believe I should never have ventured to send forth any verses of mine to the world, if it had not been done on the pressure of personal occasions. Had I been a rich man, my productions, like this *Epistle*, the *Tragedy of the Borderers*, &c., would most likely have been confined to manuscript."

An interesting passage from an unpublished letter of Miss Wordsworth's on the *White Doe of Rylstone*, confirms this statement:

"My brother was very much pleased with your frankness in telling us that you did not perfectly like his poem. He wishes to know what your feelings were—whether the tale itself did not interest you—or whether you could not enter into the conception of Emily's character, or take delight in that visionary communion which is supposed to have existed between her and the Doe. Do not fear to give him pain. He is far too much accustomed to be abused to receive pain from it (at least as far as he himself is concerned). My reason for asking you these questions is, that some of our friends, who are equal admirers of the *White Doe* and of my brother's published poems, think that *this* poem will sell on account of the story; that is, that the story will bear up those points which are above the level of the public taste; whereas, the two last volumes—except by a few solitary individuals, who are passionately devoted to my brother's works—are abused by wholesale.

"Now, as his sole object in publishing this poem at present would be for the sake of the money, he would not publish it if he did not think, from the several judgments of his friends, that it would be likely to have a sale. He has no pleasure in publishing—he even detests it; and if it were not that he is *not* over-wealthy, he would leave all his works to be published after his death. William himself is sure that the *White Doe* will not sell or be admired, except by a very few, at first; and only yields to Mary's entreaties and mine. We are determined, however, if we are deceived this time, to let him have his own way in future."

These passages must be taken, no doubt, as representing one aspect only of the poet's impulses in the matter. With his deep conviction of the world's real, though unrecognised, need of a pure vein of poetry, we can hardly imagine him as permanently satisfied to defer his own contribution till after his death. Yet we may certainly believe that the need of money helped him to overcome much diffidence as to publication; and we may discern something dignified in his frank avowal of this when it is taken in connexion with his scrupulous abstinence from any attempt to win the suffrages of the multitude by means unworthy of his high vocation. He could never, indeed, have written poems which could have vied in immediate popularity with those of Byron or Scott. But the criticisms on the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* must have shown him that a slight alteration of method—nay, even the excision of a few pages in each volume, pages certain to be loudly objected to—would have made a marked difference in the sale and its proceeds. From this point of view, even poems which we may now feel to have been needlessly puerile and grotesque acquire a certain impressiveness, when we recognise that the theory which demanded their composition was one which their author was willing to uphold at the cost of some years of real physical privation, and of the postponement for a generation of his legitimate fame.

CHAPTER IX.

POETICAL DICTION.—"LAODAMIA."—"EVENING ODE."

THE *Excursion* appeared in 1814, and in the course of the next year Wordsworth republished his minor poems, so arranged as to indicate the faculty of the mind which he considered to have been predominant in the composition of each. To most readers this disposition has always seemed somewhat arbitrary; and it was once suggested to Wordsworth that a chronological arrangement would be better. The manner in which Wordsworth met this proposal indicated the limit of his absorption in himself—his real desire only to dwell on his own feelings in such a way as might make them useful to others. For he rejected the plan as too egoistical—as emphasizing the succession of moods in the poet's mind, rather than the lessons which those moods could teach. His objection points, at any rate, to a real danger which any man's simplicity of character incurs by dwelling too attentively on the changing phases of his own thought. But after the writer's death the historical spirit will demand that poems, like other artistic products, should be disposed for the most part in the order of time.

In a preface to this edition of 1815, and a supplementary essay, he developed the theory on poetry already set forth in a well-known preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads.* Much of the matter of these essays, received at the time with contemptuous aversion, is now accepted as truth; and few compositions of equal length contains so much of vigorous criticism and sound reflection. It is only when they generalise too confidently that they are in danger of misleading us: for all expositions of the art and practice of poetry must necessarily be incomplete. Poetry, like all the arts, is essentially a "mystery." Its charm depends upon qualities which we can neither define accurately, nor reduce to rule, nor create again at pleasure. Mankind, however, are unwilling to admit this; and they endeavour from time to time to persuade themselves that they have discovered the rules which will enable them to produce the desired effect. And so much of the effect *can* thus be reproduced, that it is often possible to believe for a time that the problem has been solved. Pope, to take the instance which was prominent in Wordsworth's mind, was by general admission a poet. But his success seemed to depend on imitable peculiarities; and Pope's imitators were so like Pope that it was

hard to draw a line and say where they ceased to be poets. At last, however, this imitative school began to prove too much. If all the insipid verses which they wrote were poetry, what was the use of writing poetry at all? A reaction succeeded, which asserted that poetry depends on emotion, and not on polish: that it consists precisely in those things which frigid imitators lack. Cowper, Burns, and Crabbe (especially in his *Sir Eustace Grey*) had preceded Wordsworth as leaders of this reaction. But they had acted half unconsciously, or had even at times themselves attempted to copy the very style which they were superseding.

Wordsworth, too, began with a tendency to imitate Pope, but only in the school exercises which he wrote as a boy. Poetry soon became to him the expression of his own deep and simple feelings; and then he rebelled against rhetoric and unreality, and found for himself a directer and truer voice. "I have proposed to myself to imitate and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men. . . . I have taken as much pains to avoid what is usually called poetic diction as others ordinarily take to produce it." And he erected this practice into a general principle in the following passage:

"I do not doubt that it may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between poetry and painting, and accordingly we call them sisters; but where shall we find bonds of connexion sufficiently strict to typify the affinity between metrical and prose composition? If it be affirmed that rhyme and metrical arrangement of themselves constitute a distinction which overturns what I have been saying on the strict affinity of metrical language with that of prose, and paves the way for other artificial distinctions which the mind voluntarily admits, I answer that the language of such poetry as I am recommending is, as far as possible, a selection of the language really spoken by men; that this selection, wherever it is made with true taste and feeling, will of itself form a distinction far greater than would at first be imagined, and will entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life; and if metre be superadded thereto, I believe that a dissimilitude will be produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational mind. What other distinction would we have? whence is it to come? and where is it to exist?"

There is a definiteness and simplicity about this description of poetry which may well make us wonder why this precious thing (producible, apparently, as easily as Pope's imitators supposed, although by means different from theirs) is not offered to us by more persons, and of better quality. And it will not be hard to show that a good poetical style must possess certain characteristics which, although something like them must exist in a good prose style, are carried in poetry to a pitch so much higher as virtually to need a specific faculty for their successful production.

To illustrate the inadequacy of Wordsworth's theory to explain the merits of his own poetry, I select a stanza from one of his simplest and most characteristic poems, *The Affliction of Margaret:*

> "Perhaps some dungeon hears thee groan,
> Maimed, mangled by inhuman men,
> Or thou upon a Desert thrown
> Inheritest the lion's Den;
> Or hast been summoned to the Deep,
> Thou, thou and all thy mates, to keep
> An incommunicable sleep."

These lines, supposed to be uttered by "a poor widow at Penrith," afford a fair illustration of what Wordsworth calls "the language really spoken by men," with "metre superadded." "What other distinction from prose," he asks, "would we have?" We may answer that we would have what he has actually given us, viz., an appropriate and attractive music, lying both on the rhythm and in the actual sound of the words used—a music whose complexity may be indicated here by drawing out some of its elements in detail, at the risk of appearing pedantic and technical. We observe then, (*a*), that the general movement of the lines is unusually slow. They contain a very large proportion of strong accents and long vowels, to suit the tone of deep and despairing sorrow. In six places only out of twenty-eight is the accent weak where it might be expected to be strong (in the second syllable, namely, of the iambic foot), and in each of these cases the omission of a possible accent throws greater weight on the next succeeding accent—on the accents, that is to say, contained in the words inhuman, desert, lion, summoned, deep, and sleep. (*b*) The first four lines contain subtle alliterations of the letters d, h, m, and th. In this connexion it should be remembered that when consonants are thus repeated at the beginning of syllables, those syllables need not be at the beginning of words; and further, that repetitions scarcely more numerous than chance alone would have occasioned may be so placed by the poet as to produce a strongly-felt effect. If any one doubts the effectiveness of the unobvious alliterations here insisted on, let him read (1) "jungle" for "desert," (2) "maybe" for "perhaps," (3) "tortured" for "mangled," (4) "blown" for "thrown," and he will become sensible of the lack of the metrical support which the existing consonants give one another. The three last lines contain one or two similar alliterations on which I need not dwell. (*c*) The words *inheritest* and *summoned* are by no means such as "a poor widow," even at Penrith, would employ; they are used to intensify the imagined relation which connects the missing man with (1) the wild beasts who surround him, and (2) the invisible Power which leads; so that something mysterious and awful is added to his fate. (*d*) This impression is heightened by the use of the word *incommunicable* in an unusual sense, "incapable of being communicated *with*," instead of "incapable of being communicated;" while (*e*) the expression "to keep an incommunicable sleep" for "to lie dead," gives dignity to the occasion by carrying the mind back along a train of literary associations of which the well-known ἀτέρμονα νηγρετον ὕπνον of Moschus may be taken as the type.

We must not, of course, suppose that Wordsworth consciously sought these alliterations, arranged these accents, resolved to introduce an unusual word in the last line, or hunted for a classical allusion. But what the poet's brain does not do consciously it does unconsciously; a selective action is going on in its recesses simultaneously with the overt train of thought, and on the degree of this unconscious suggestiveness the richness and melody of the poetry will depend.

No rules can secure the attainment of these effects; and the very same artifices which are delightful when used by one man seem mechanical and offensive when used by another. Nor is it by any means always the case that the man who can most delicately appreciate the melody of the poetry of others will be able to produce similar melody himself. Nay, even if he can produce it one year, it by no means follows that he will be able to produce it the next. Of all qualifications for writing poetry this inventive music is the most arbitrarily distributed, and the most evanescent. But it is the more important to dwell on its necessity, inasmuch as both good and bad poets are tempted to ignore it. The good poet prefers to ascribe his success to higher qualities; to his imagination, elevation of thought, descriptive faculty. The bad poet can more easily urge that his thoughts are too advanced for mankind to appreciate than that his melody is too sweet for their ears to catch. And when the gift vanishes no poet is willing to confess that it is gone; so humiliating is it to lose power over mankind by the loss of something which seems quite independent of intellect or character. And yet so it is. For some twenty years at most (1798–1818) Wordsworth possessed this gift of melody. During those years he wrote works which profoundly influenced mankind. The gift then left him: he continued as wise and as earnest as ever, but his poems had no longer any potency, nor his existence much public importance.

Humiliating as such reflections may seem, they are in accordance with actual experience in all branches of art. The fact is that the pleasures which art gives us are complex in the extreme. We are always disposed to dwell on such of their elements as are explicable, and can in some way be traced to moral or intellectual sources. But they contain also other elements which are inexplicable, non-moral, and non-intellectual, and which render most of our attempted explanations of artistic merit so incomplete as to be practically misleading. Among such incomplete explanations Wordsworth's essays must certainly be ranked. It would not be safe for any man to believe that he had produced true poetry because he had fulfilled the conditions which Wordsworth lays down. But the essays effected what is perhaps as much as the writer on art can fairly hope to accomplish. They placed in a striking light that side of the subject which had been too long ignored; they aided in recalling an art which had become conventional and fantastic into the normal current of English thought and speech.

It may be added that, both in doctrine and practice, Words-

worth exhibits a progressive reaction from the extreme views with which he starts towards that common vein of good sense and sound judgment which may be traced back to Horace, Longinus, and Aristotle. His first preface is violently polemic. He attacks with reason that conception of the sublime and beautiful which is represented by Dryden's picture of "Cortes alone in his night-gown," remarking that "the mountains seem to nod their drowsy heads." But the only example of true poetry which he sees fit to adduce in contrast consists in a stanza from the *Babes in the Wood.* In his preface of 1815 he is not less severe on false sentiment and false observation. But his views of the complexity and dignity of poetry have been much developed, and he is willing now to draw his favourable instances from Shakspeare, Milton, Virgil, and himself.

His own practice underwent a corresponding change. It is only to a few poems of his earlier years that the famous parody of the *Rejected Addresses* fairly applies—

> "My father's walls are made of brick,
> But not so tall and not so thick
> As these; and goodness me!
> My father's beams are made of wood,
> But never, never half so good
> As those that now I see!"

Lines something like these might have occurred in *The Thorn* or *The Idiot Boy.* Nothing could be more different from the style of the sonnets, or of the *Ode to Duty*, or of *Laodamia.* And yet both the simplicity of the earlier and the pomp of the later poems were almost always noble; nor is the transition from the one style to the other a perplexing or abnormal thing. For all sincere styles are congruous to one another, whether they be adorned or no, as all high natures are congruous to one another, whether in the garb of peasant or of prince. What is incongruous to both is affectation, vulgarity, egoism; and while the noble style can be interchangeably childlike or magnificent, as its theme requires, the ignoble can neither simplify itself into purity nor deck itself into grandeur.

It need not, therefore, surprise us to find the classical models becoming more and more dominant in Wordsworth's mind, till the poet of *Poor Susan* and *The Cuckoo* spends months over the attempt to translate the *Æneid*—to win the secret of that style which he placed at the head of all poetic styles, and of those verses which "wind," as he says, "with the majesty of the Conscript Fathers entering the Senate-house in solemn possession," and enveloped in their imperial melancholy all the sorrows and the fates of man.

And, indeed, so tranquil and uniform was the life which we are now retracing, and at the same time so receptive of any noble influence which opportunity might bring, that a real epoch is marked in Wordsworth's poetical career by the mere rereading of some Latin authors in 1814–16 with a view to preparing his eldest son

for the University. Among the poets whom he thus studied was one in whom he might seem to discern his own spirit endowed with grander proportions, and meditating on sadder fates. Among the poets of the battlefield, of the study, of the boudoir, he encountered the first Priest of Nature, the first poet in Europe who had deliberately shunned the life of courts and cities for the mere joy in Nature's presence, for "sweet Parthenope and the fields beside Vesevus' hill."

There are, indeed, passages in the *Georgics* so Wordsworthian, as we now call it, in tone, that it is hard to realise what centuries separated them from the *Sonnet to Lady Beaumont* or from *Ruth*. Such, for instance, is the picture of the Corycian old man, who had made himself independent of the seasons by his gardening skill, so that "when gloomy winter was still rending the stones with frost, still curbing with ice the rivers' onward flow, he even then was plucking the soft hyacinth's bloom, and chid the tardy summer and delaying airs of spring." Such, again, is the passage where the poet breaks from the glories of successful industry into the delight of watching the great processes which nature accomplishes untutored and alone, "the joy of gazing on Cytorus waving with boxwood, and on forests of Narycian pine, on tracts that never felt the harrow, nor knew the care of man."

Such thoughts as these the Roman and the English poet had in common—the heritage of untarnished souls.

> "I asked; 'twas whispered: The device
> To each and all might well belong:
> It is the Spirit of Paradise
> That prompts such work, a Spirit strong,
> That gives to all the self-same bent
> Where life is wise and innocent."

It is not only in tenderness but in dignity that the "wise and innocent" are wont to be at one. Strong in tranquillity, they can intervene amid great emotions with a master's voice, and project on the storm of passion the clear light of their unchanging calm. And thus it was that the study of Virgil, and especially of Virgil's solemn picture of the Underworld, prompted in Wordsworth's mind the most majestic of his poems, his one great utterance on heroic love.

He had as yet written little on any such topic as this. At Goslar he had composed the poems on *Lucy* to which allusion has already been made. And after his happy marriage he had painted in one of the best known of his poems the sweet transitions of wedded love, as it moves on from the first shock and agitation of the encounter of predestined souls through all tendernesses of intimate affection into a pervading permanency and calm. Scattered, moreover, throughout his poems are several passages in which the passion is treated with similar force and truth. The poem which begins "'Tis said that some have died for love" depicts the enduring poignancy of bereavement with an "iron pathos" that is al-

most too strong for art. And something of the same power of clinging attachment is shown in the sonnet where the poet is stung with the thought that "even for the least division of an hour" he has taken pleasure in the life around him, without the accustomed tacit reference to one who has passed away. There is a brighter touch of constancy in that other sonnet where, after letting his fancy play over a glad imaginary past, he turns to his wife, ashamed that even in so vague a vision he could have shaped for himself a solitary joy:

> "Let *her* be comprehended in the frame
> Of these illusions, or they please no more."

In later years the two sonnets on his wife's picture set on that love the consecration of faithful age; and there are those who can recall his look as he gazed on the picture and tried to recognise in that aged face the Beloved who to him was ever young and fair—a look as of one dwelling in life-long affections with the unquestioning single-heartedness of a child.

And here it might have been thought that as his experience ended, his power of description would have ended too. But it was not so. Under the powerful stimulus of the sixth *Æneid*—allusions to which pervade *Laodamia** throughout—with unusual labour, and by a strenuous effort of the imagination, Wordsworth was enabled to depict his own love *in excelsis*, to imagine what aspect it might have worn, if it had been its destiny to deny itself at some heroic call, and to confront with nobleness an extreme emergency, and to be victor (as Plato has it) in an Olympian contest of the soul. For, indeed, the "fervent, not ungovernable, love," which is the ideal that Protesilaus is sent to teach, is on a great scale the same affection which we have been considering in domesticity and peace; it is love considered not as a revolution but as a consummation; as a self-abandonment not to a laxer but to a sterner law; no longer as an invasive passion, but as the deliberate habit of the soul. It is that conception of love which springs into being in the last canto of Dante's *Purgatory*—which finds in English chivalry a noble voice—

> "I could not love thee, dear, so much,
> Loved I not honour more."

For, indeed (even as Plato says that Beauty is the splendour of Truth), so such a Love as this is the splendour of Virtue; it is the unexpected spark that flashes from self-forgetful soul to soul, it is man's standing evidence that he "must lose himself to find himself," and that only when the veil of his personality has lifted from around him can he recognise that he is already in heaven.

In a second poem inspired by this revived study of classical

* *Laodamia* should be read (as it is given in Mr. Matthew Arnold's admirable volume of selections) with the *earlier* conclusion: the *second* form is less satisfactory; and the *third*, with its sermonising tone, "thus all in vain exhorted and reproved," is worst of all.

antiquity Wordsworth has traced the career of Dion—the worthy pupil of Plato, the philosophic ruler of Syracuse, who allowed himself to shed blood unjustly, though for the public good, and was haunted by a spectre symbolical of this fatal error. At last Dion was assassinated, and the words in which the poet tells his fate seem to me to breathe the very triumph of philosophy, to paint with a touch the greatness of a spirit which makes of Death himself a deliverer, and has its strength in the unseen—

> So were the hopeless troubles, that involved
> The soul of Dion, instantly dissolved."

I can only compare these lines to that famous passage of Sophocles where the lamentations of the dying Œdipus are interrupted by the impatient summons of an unseen accompanying god. In both places the effect is the same—to present to us with striking brevity the contrast between the visible and the invisible presences that may stand about a man's last hour; for he may feel with the desolate Œdipus that "all I am has perished"—he may sink like Dion through inextricable sadness to a disastrous death, and then in a moment the transitory shall disappear and the essential shall be made plain, and from Dion's upright spirit the perplexities shall vanish away, and Œdipus, in the welcome of that unknown companionship, shall find his expiations over and his reward begun.

It is true, no doubt, that when Wordsworth wrote these poems he had lost something of the young inimitable charm which fills such pieces as the *Fountain* or the *Solitary Reaper*. His language is majestic, but it is no longer magical. And yet we cannot but feel that he has put into these poems something which he could not have put into the poems which preceded them; that they bear the impress of a soul which has added moral effort to poetic inspiration, and is mistress now of the acquired as well as of the innate virtue. For it is words like these that are the strength and stay of men; nor can their accent of lofty earnestness be simulated by the writer's art. Literary skill may deceive the reader who seeks a literary pleasure alone; and he to whom these strong consolations are a mere imaginative luxury may be uncertain or indifferent out of what heart they come. But those who need them know; spirits that hunger after righteousness discern their proper food; there is no fear lest they confound the sentimental and superficial with those weighty utterances of moral truth which are the most precious legacy that a man can leave to mankind.

Thus far, then, I must hold that, although much of grace had already vanished, there was on the whole a progress and elevation in the mind of him of whom we treat. But the culminating point is here. After this—whatever ripening process may have been at work unseen—what is chiefly visible is the slow stiffening of the imaginative power, the slow withdrawal of the insight into the soul of things, and a descent—ἀβληχρὸς μάλα τοῖος—"soft as soft can be," to the euthanasy of a death that was like sleep.

The impression produced by Wordsworth's reperusal of Virgil in 1814–16 was a deep and lasting one. In 1829–30 he devoted much time and labour to a translation of the first three books of the *Æneid*, and it is interesting to note the gradual modification of his views as to the true method of rendering poetry.

"I have long been persuaded," he writes to Lord Lonsdale in 1829, "that Milton formed his blank verse upon the model of the *Georgics* and the *Æneid*, and I am so much struck with this resemblance, that I should have attempted Virgil in blank verse, had I not been persuaded that no ancient author can with advantage be so rendered. Their religion, their warfare, their course of action and feeling are too remote from modern interest to allow it. We require every possible help and attraction of sound in our language to smooth the way for the admission of things so remote from our present concerns. My own notion of translation is, that it cannot be too literal, provided these faults be avoided: *baldness*, in which I include all that takes from dignity; and strangeness, or uncouthness, including harshness; and lastly, attempts to convey meanings, which, as they cannot be given but by languid circumlocutions, cannot in fact be said to be given at all. . . . I feel it, however, to be too probable that my translation is deficient in ornament, because I must unavoidably have lost many of Virgil's, and have never without reluctance attempted a compensation of my own."

The truth of this last self-criticism is very apparent from the fragments of the translation which were published in the *Philological Museum;* and Coleridge, to whom the whole manuscript was submitted, justly complains of finding "page after page without a single brilliant note;" and adds, "Finally, my conviction is that you undertake an impossibility, and that there is no medium between a pure version and one on the avowed principle of *compensation* in the widest sense, *i.e.*, manner, genius, total effect; I confine myself to *Virgil* when I say this." And it appears that Wordsworth himself came round to this view, for, reluctantly sending a specimen of his work to the *Philological Museum* in 1832, he says:

> "Having been displeased in modern translations with the additions of incongruous matter, I began to translate with a resolve to keep clear of that fault by adding nothing: but I became convinced that a spirited translation can scarcely be accomplished in the English language without admitting a principle of compensation."

There is a curious analogy between the experiences of Cowper and Wordsworth in the way of translation. Wordsworth's translation of Virgil was prompted by the same kind of reaction against the reckless laxity of Dryden as that which inspired Cowper against the distorting artificiality of Pope. In each case the new translator cared more for his author, and took a much higher view of a translator's duty, than his predecessor had done. But in each case the plain and accurate translation was a failure, while the loose and ornate one continued to be admired. We need not conclude from

this that the wilful inaccuracy of Pope or Dryden would be any longer excusable in such a work. But on the other hand, we may certainly feel that nothing is gained by rendering an ancient poet into verse at all unless that verse be of a quality to give a pleasure independent of the faithfulness of the translation which it conveys.

The translations and *Laodamia* are not the only indications of the influence which Virgil exercised over Wordsworth. Whether from mere similarity of feeling, or from more or less conscious recollection, there are frequent passages in the English which recall the Roman poet. Who can hear Wordsworth describe how a poet on the island in Grasmere

> "At noon
> Spreads out his limbs, while, yet unshorn, the sheep,
> Panting beneath the burthen of their wool,
> Lie round him, even as if they were a part
> Of his own household"—

and not think of the stately tenderness of Virgil's

> "Stant et oves circum; nostri nec pœnitet illas,"

and the flocks of Arcady that gather round in sympathy with the lovelorn Gallus' woe?

So, again, the well-known lines—

> "Not seldom, clad in radiant vest,
> Deceitfully goes forth the Morn
> Not seldom Evening in the west
> Sinks smilingly forsworn"—

are almost a translation of Palinurus' remonstrance with "the treachery of tranquil heaven." And when the poet wishes for any link which could bind him closer to the Highland maiden who has flitted across his path as a being of a different world from his own—

> "Thine elder Brother would I be,
> Thy Father, anything to thee!"—

we hear the echo of the sadder plaint—

> "Atque utinam e vobis unus"—

when the Roman statesman longs to be made one with the simple life of shepherd or husbandman, and to know their undistracted joy.

Still more impressive is the shock of surprise with which we read in Wordsworth's poem on Ossian the following lines:

> "Musæus, stationed with his lyre
> Supreme among the Elysian quire,
> Is, for the dwellers upon earth,
> Mute as a lark ere morning's birth,"

and perceive that he who wrote them has entered—where no commentator could conduct him—into the solemn pathos of Virgil's *Musæum ante omnis;* where the singer whose very existence upon earth has become a legend and a mythic name is seen keeping in

the underworld his old pre-eminence, and towering above the blessed dead.

This is a stage in Wordsworth's career on which his biographer is tempted unduly to linger. For we have reached the Indian summer of his genius; it can still shine at moments bright as ever, and with even a new majesty and calm; but we feel, nevertheless, that the melody is dying from his song; that he is hardening into self-repetition, into rhetoric, into sermonising common-place, and is rigid where he was once profound. The *Thanksgiving Ode* (1816) strikes death to the heart. The accustomed patriotic sentiments—the accustomed virtuous aspirations—these are still there; but the accent is like that of a ghost who calls to us in hollow-mimicry of a voice that once we loved.

And yet Wordsworth's poetic life was not to close without a great symbolical spectacle, a solemn farewell. Sunset among the Cumbrian hills, often of remarkable beauty, once or twice, perhaps, in a score of years, reaches a pitch of illusion and magnificence which indeed seems nothing less than the commingling of earth and heaven. Such a sight—seen from Rydal Mount in 1818—afforded once more the needed stimulus, and evoked that "*Evening Ode. composed on an evening of extraordinary splendour and beauty*," which is the last considerable production of Wordsworth's genius. In this ode we recognise the peculiar gift of reproducing with magical simplicity, as it were, the inmost virtue of natural phenomena.

> "No sound is uttered, but a deep
> And solemn harmony pervades
> The hollow vale from steep to steep,
> And penetrates the glades.
> Far distant images draw nigh,
> Called forth by wondrous potency
> Of beamy radiance, that imbues
> Whate'er it strikes, with gem-like hues!
> In vision exquisitely clear
> Herds range along the mountain side;
> And glistening antlers are descried,
> And gilded flocks appear."

Once more the poet brings home to us that sense of belonging at once to two worlds, which gives to human life so much of mysterious solemnity.

> "Wings at my shoulder seem to play;
> But, rooted here, I stand and gaze
> On those bright steps that heavenward raise
> Their practicable way."

And the poem ends—with a deep personal pathos—in an allusio, repeated from the *Ode on Immortality*, to the light which "lay about him in his infancy"—the light

"Full early lost, and fruitlessly deplored;
Which at this moment, on my waking sight
Appears to shine, by miracle restored!
My soul, though yet confined to earth,
Rejoices in a second birth;
—'Tis past, the visionary splendour fades
And night approaches with her shades."

For those to whom the mission of Wordsworth appears before all things as a religious one there is something solemn in the spectacle of the seer standing at the close of his own apocalypse, with the consciousness that the stiffening brain would never permit him to drink again that overflowing sense of glory and revelation—never, till he should drink it new in the kingdom of God. He lived, in fact, through another generation of men, but the vision came to him no more;

"Or if some vestige of those gleams
Survived, 'twas only in his dreams."

We look on a man's life for the most part as forming in itself a completed drama. We love to see the interest maintained to the close, the pathos deepened at the departing hour. To die on the same day is the prayer of lovers; to vanish at Trafalgar is the ideal of heroic souls. And yet—so wide and various are the issues of life—there is a solemnity as profound in a quite different lot; for if we are moving among eternal emotions we should have time to bear witness that they are eternal. Even Love left desolate may feel with a proud triumph that it could never have rooted itself so immutably amid the joys of a visible return as it can do through the constancies of bereavement, and the life-long memory which is a life-long hope. And Vision, Revelation, Ecstasy—it is not only while these are kindling our way that we should speak of them to men, but rather when they have passed from us and left us only their record in our souls, whose permanence confirms the fiery finger which wrote it long ago. For as the Greeks would end the first drama of a trilogy with a hush of concentration, and with declining notes of calm, so to us the narrowing receptivity and persistent steadfastness of age suggest not only decay but expectancy, and not death so much as sleep; or seem, as it were, the beginning of operations which are not measured by our hurrying time, nor tested by any achievement to be accomplished here.

CHAPTER X.

NATURAL RELIGION.

It will have been obvious from the preceding pages, as well as from the tone of other criticisms on Wordsworth, that his exponents are not content to treat his poems on nature simply as graceful descriptive pieces, but speak of him in terms usually reserved for the originators of some great religious movement. "The very image of Wordsworth," says De Quincey, for instance, "as I prefigured it to my own planet-struck eye, crushed my faculties as before Elijah or St. Paul." How was it that poems so simple in outward form that the reviewers of the day classed them with the *Song of Sixpence*, or at best with the *Babes in the Wood*, could affect a critic like De Quincey—I do not say with admiration, but with this exceptional sense of revelation and awe?

The explanation of this anomaly lies, as is well known, in something new and individual in the way in which Wordsworth regarded nature; something more or less discernible in most of his works, and redeeming even some of the slightest of them from insignificance, while conferring on the more serious and sustained pieces an importance of a different order from that which attaches to even the most brilliant productions of his contemporaries. To define with exactness, however, what was this new element imported by our poet into man's view of nature is far from easy, and requires some brief consideration of the attitude in this respect of his predecessors.

There is so much in the external world which is terrible or unfriendly to man, that the first impression made on him by Nature as a whole, even in temperate climates, is usually that of awfulness; his admiration being reserved for the fragments of her which he has utilised for his own purposes, or adorned with his own handiwork. When Homer tells us of a place

> "Where even a god might gaze, and stand apart,
> And feel a wondering rapture at the heart,"

it is of no prospect of sea or mountain that he is speaking, but of a garden where everything is planted in rows, and there is a never-ending succession of pears and figs. These gentler aspects of

nature will have their minor deities to represent them; but the men, of whatever race they be, whose minds are most absorbed in the problems of man's position and destiny will tend for the most part to some sterner and more overwhelming conception of the sum of things. "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" is the cry of Hebrew piety as well as of modern science; and the "majestas cognita rerum"—the recognised majesty of the universe—teaches Lucretius only the indifference of gods and the misery of men.

But in a well-known passage, in which Lucretius is honoured as he deserves, we find, nevertheless, a different view hinted, with an impressiveness which it had hardly acquired till then. We find Virgil implying that scientific knowledge of Nature may not be the only way of arriving at the truth about her; that her loveliness is also a revelation, and that the soul which is in unison with her is justified by its own peace. This is the very substance of *The Poet's Epitaph* also; of the poem in which Wordsworth at the beginning of his career describes himself as he continued till its close—the poet who "murmurs near the running brooks a music sweeter than their own"—who scorns the man of science "who would peep and botanise upon his mother's grave."

"The outward shows of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley, he has viewed;
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude.

"In common things that round us lie
Some random truths he can impart—
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

"But he is weak, both man and boy,
Hath been an idler in the land;
Contented if he might enjoy
The things which others understand."

Like much else in the literature of imperial Rome, the passage in the second *Georgic*, to which I have referred, is in its essence more modern than the Middle Ages. Mediæval Christianity involved a divorce from the nature around us, as well as from the nature within. With the rise of modern spirit delight in the external world returns; and from Chaucer downwards through the whole course of English poetry are scattered indications of a mood which draws from visible things an intuition of things not seen. When Withers, in words which Wordsworth has fondly quoted, says of his muse:

"By the murmur of a spring,
Or the least bough's rustelling;
By a daisy whose leaves spread,
Shut when Titan goes to bed;

Or a shady bush or tree—
She could more infuse in me
Than all Nature's beauties can
In some other wiser man"—

he felt already, as Wordsworth after him, that Nature is no mere collection of phenomena, but infuses into her least approaches some sense of her mysterious whole.

Passages like this, however, must not be too closely pressed. The mystic element in English literature has run for the most part into other channels; and when, after Pope's reign of artificiality and convention, attention was redirected to the phenomena of Nature by Collins, Beattie, Thomson, Crabbe, Cowper, Burns, and Scott, it was in a spirit of admiring observation rather than of an intimate worship. Sometimes, as for the most part in Thomson, we have mere picturesqueness—a reproduction of Nature for the mere pleasure of reproducing her—a kind of stock-taking of her habitual effects. Or sometimes, as in Burns, we have a glowing spirit which looks on Nature with a side glance, and uses her as an accessory to the expression of human love and woe. Cowper sometimes contemplated her as a whole, but only as affording a proof of the wisdom and goodness of a personal Creator.

To express what is characteristic in Wordsworth we must recur to a more generalised conception of the relations between the natural and the spiritual worlds. We must say with Plato—the lawgiver of all subsequent idealists—that the unknown realities around us, which the philosopher apprehends by the contemplation of abstract truth, become in various ways obscurely perceptible to men under the influence of "divine madness"—of an enthusiasm which is in fact inspiration. And further, giving, as he so often does, a half-fanciful expression to a substance of deep meaning, Plato distinguishes four kinds of this enthusiasm. There is the prophet's glow of revelation: and the prevailing prayer which averts the wrath of heaven; and that philosophy which enters, so to say, unawares into the poet through his art, and into the lover through his love. Each of these stimuli may so exalt the inward faculties as to make a man ἔνθεος καὶ ἔκφρων—"bereft of reason, but filled with divinity"—percipient of an intelligence other and larger than his own. To this list Wordsworth has made an important addition. He has shown by his example and writings that the contemplation of Nature may become a stimulus as inspiring as these; may enable us "to see into the life of things"—as far, perhaps, as beatific vision or prophetic rapture can attain. Assertions so impalpable as these must justify themselves by subjective evidence. He who claims to give a message must satisfy us that he has himself received it; and, inasmuch as transcendent things are in themselves inexpressible, he must convey to us in hints and figures the conviction which we need. Prayer may bring the spiritual world near to us; but when the eyes of the kneeling Dominic seem to say "*Io son venuto a questo*," their look must persuade us that the

life of worship has indeed attained the reward of vision. Art, too, may be inspired; but the artist, in whatever field he works, must have "such a mastery of his mystery" that the fabric of his imagination stands visible in its own light before our eyes—

> "Seeing it is built
> Of music; therefore never built at all,
> And therefore built for ever."

Love may open heaven; but when the lover would invite us "thither, where are the eyes of Beatrice," he must make us feel that his individual passion is indeed part and parcel of that love "which moves the sun and the other stars."

And so also with Wordsworth. Unless the words which describe the intense and sympathetic gaze with which he contemplates Nature convince us of the reality of "the light which never was on sea or land"—of the "Presence which disturbs him with the joy of elevated thoughts"—of the authentic vision of those hours

> "When the light of sense
> Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
> The invisible world;"

unless his tone awakes a responsive conviction in ourselves, there is no argument by which he can prove to us that he is offering a new insight to mankind. Yet, on the other hand, it need not be unreasonable to see in his message something more than a mere individual fancy. It seems, at least, to be closely correlated with those other messages of which we have spoken—those other cases where some original element of our nature is capable of being regarded as an inlet of mystic truth. For in each of these complex aspects of religion we see, perhaps, the modification of a primeval instinct. There is a point of view from which Revelation seems to be but transfigured Sorcery, and Love transfigured Appetite, and Philosophy man's ordered Wonder, and Prayer his softening Fear. And similarly, in the natural religion of Wordsworth we may discern the modified outcome of other human impulses hardly less universal—of those instincts which led our forefathers to people earth and air with deities, or to vivify the whole universe with a single soul. In this view the achievement of Wordsworth was of a kind which most of the moral leaders of the race have in some way or other performed. It was that he turned a theology back again into a religion; that he revived in a higher and purer form those primitive elements of reverence for Nature's powers which had diffused themselves into speculation, or crystallised into mythology; that for a system of beliefs about Nature, which paganism had allowed to become grotesque—of rites which had become unmeaning—he substituted an admiration for Nature so constant, an understanding of her so subtle, a sympathy so profound, that they became a veritable worship. Such worship, I repeat, is not what

we commonly imply either by paganism or by pantheism. For in pagan countries, though the gods may have originally represented natural forces, yet the conception of them soon becomes anthropomorphic, and they are reverenced as transcendent *men;* and, on the other hand, pantheism is generally characterised by an indifference to things in the concrete, to Nature in detail; so that the Whole, or Universe, with which the Stoics (for instance) sought to be in harmony, was approached not by contemplating external objects, but rather by ignoring them.

Yet here I would be understood to speak only in the most general manner. So congruous in all ages are the aspirations and the hopes of men that it would be rash indeed to attempt to assign the moment when any spiritual truth rises for the first time on human consciousness. But thus much, I think, may be fairly said, that the maxims of Wordsworth's form of natural religion were uttered before Wordsworth only in the sense in which the maxims of Christianity were uttered before Christ. To compare small things with great—or, rather, to compare great things with things vastly greater—the essential spirit of the *Lines near Tintern Abbey* was for practical purposes as new to mankind as the essential spirit of the *Sermon on the Mount.* Not the isolated expression of moral ideas, but their fusion into a whole in one memorable personality, is that which connects them forever with a single name. Therefore it is that Wordsworth is venerated; because so many men—indifferent, it may be, to literary or poetical effects, as such—he has shown by the subtle intensity of his own emotion how the contemplation of Nature can be made a revealing agency, like Love or Prayer—an opening, if indeed there be any opening, into the transcendant world.

The prophet with such a message as this will, of course, appeal for the most part to the experience of exceptional moments—those moments when "we see into the life of things;" when the face of Nature sends to us "gleams like the flashing of a shield"—hours such as those of the Solitary, who, gazing on the lovely distant scene,

> "Would gaze till it became
> Far lovelier, and his heart could not sustain
> The beauty, still more beauteous."

But the idealist, of whatever school, is seldom content to base his appeal to us upon these scattered intuitions alone. There is a whole epoch of our existence whose memories, differing, indeed, immensely in vividness and importance in the minds of different men, are yet sufficiently common to all men to form a favourite basis for philosophical argument. "The child is father of the man;" and through the recollection and observation of early childhood we may hope to trace our ancestry—in heaven above or on the earth beneath— in its most significant manifestation.

It is to the workings of the mind of the child that the philosopher appeals who wishes to prove that knowledge is recollection, and

that our recognition of geometrical truths—so prompt as to appear instinctive—depends on our having been actually familiar with them in an earlier world. The Christian mystic invokes with equal confidence his own memories of a state which seemed as yet to know no sin:

> "Happy those early days, when I
> Shined in my angel infancy!
> Before I understood this place
> Appointed for my second race,
> Or taught my soul to fancy aught
> But a white, celestial thought;
> When yet I had not walked above
> A mile or two from my first Love,
> And, looking back at that short space,
> Could see a glimpse of His bright face;
> When on some gilded cloud or flower
> My gazing soul would dwell an hour,
> And in those weaker glories spy
> Some shadows of eternity;
> Before I taught my tongue to wound
> My conscience with a sinful sound,
> Or had the black art to dispense
> A several sin to every sense,
> But felt through all this fleshly dress
> Bright shoots of everlastingness."

And Wordsworth, whose recollections were exceptionally vivid, and whose introspection was exceptionally penetrating, has drawn from his own childish memories philosophical lessons which are hard to disentangle in a logical statement, but which will roughly admit of being classed under two heads. For, firstly, he has shown an unusual delicacy of analysis in eliciting the "firstborn affinities that fit our new existence to existing things"—in tracing the first impact of impressions which are destined to give the mind its earliest ply, or even, in unreflecting natures, to determine the permanent modes of thought. And, secondly, from the halo of pure and vivid emotions with which our childish years are surrounded, and the close connexion of this emotion with external nature, which it glorifies and transforms, he infers that the soul has enjoyed elsewhere an existence superior to that of earth, but an existence of which external nature retains for a time the power of reminding her.

The first of these lines of thought may be illustrated by a passage in the *Prelude*, in which the boy's mind is represented as passing through precisely the train of emotion which we may imagine to be at the root of the theology of many barbarous peoples. He is rowing at night alone on Esthwaite Lake, his eyes fixed upon a ridge of crags, above which nothing is visible:

> "I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
> And as I rose upon the stroke my boat

Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again;
And, growing still in stature, the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own,
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow-tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood. But after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness—call it solitude,
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea, or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly thro' the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams."

In the controversy as to the origin of the worship of inanimate objects, or of the powers of Nature, this passage might fairly be cited as an example of the manner in which those objects, or those powers, can impress the mind with that awe which is the foundation of savage creeds, while yet they are not identified with any human intelligence, such as the spirits of ancestors or the like, nor even supposed to operate according to any human analogy.

Up to this point Wordsworth's reminiscences may seem simply to illustrate the conclusions which science reaches by other roads. But he is not content with merely recording and analysing his childish impressions: he implies, or even asserts, that these "fancies from afar are brought"—that the child's view of the world reveals to him truths which the man with difficulty retains or recovers. This is not the usual teaching of science, yet it would be hard to assert that it is absolutely impossible. The child's instincts may well be supposed to partake in larger measure of the general instincts of the race, in smaller measure of the special instincts of his own country and century, than is the case with the man. Now the feelings and beliefs of each successive century will probably be, on the whole, superior to those of any previous century. But this is not universally true; the teaching of each generation does not thus sum up the results of the whole past. And thus the child, to whom in a certain sense the past of humanity is present—who is living through the whole life of the race in little, before he lives the life of his century in large—may possibly dimly apprehend something more of truth in certain directions than is visible to the adults around him.

But, thus qualified, the intuitions of infancy might seem scarcely worth insisting on. And Wordsworth, as is well known, has followed Plato in advancing for the child a much bolder claim. The child's soul, in this view, has existed before it entered the body—has existed in a world superior to ours, but connected, by the immanence of the same pervading Spirit, with the material universe before our eyes. The child begins by feeling this material world strange to him. But he sees in it, as it were, what he has been accustomed to see; he discerns in it its kinship with the spiritual world which he dimly remembers; it is to him "an unsubstantial fairy place"—a scene at once brighter and more unreal than it will appear in his eyes when he has become acclimatised to earth. And even when this freshness of insight has passed away, it occasionally happens that sights or sounds of unusual beauty or carrying deep associations—a rainbow, a cuckoo's cay, a sunset of extraordinary splendour—will renew for a while this sense of vision and nearness to the spiritual world—a sense which never loses its reality, though with advancing years its presence grows briefer and more rare.

Such then, in prosaic statement, is the most characteristic message of Wordsworth. And it is to be noted that though Wordsworth at times presents it as a coherent theory, yet it is not necessarily of the nature of a theory, nor need be accepted or rejected as a whole; but is rather an inlet of illumining emotion in which different minds can share in the measure of their capacities or their need. There are some to whom childhood brought no strange vision of brightness, but who can feel their communion with the Divinity in Nature growing with the growth of their souls. There are others who might be unwilling to acknowledge any spiritual or transcendent source for the elevating joy which the contemplation of Nature can give, but who feel, nevertheless, that to that joy Wordsworth has been their most effective guide. A striking illustration of this fact may be drawn from the passage in which John Stuart Mill, a philosopher of a very different school, has recorded the influence exercised over him by Wordsworth's poems, read in a season of dejection, when there seemed to be no real and substantive joy in life, nothing but the excitement of the struggle with the hardships and injustices of human fates.

"What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind," he says, in his Autobiography, "was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings, which had no connexion with struggle or imperfection, but would be made richer by every improvement in the physical or social condition of mankind. From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness, when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence."

Words like these, proceeding from a mind so different from the poet's own, form perhaps as satisfactory a testimony to the value of his work as any writer can obtain: for they imply that Wordsworth has succeeded in giving his own impress to emotions which may become common to all; that he has produced a body of thought which is felt to be both distinctive and coherent, while yet it enlarges the reader's capacities instead of making demands upon his credence. Whether there be theories they shall pass; whether there be systems, they shall fail; the true epoch-maker in the history of the human soul is the man who educes from this bewildering universe a new and elevating joy.

I have alluded above to some of the passages, most of them familiar enough, in which Wordsworth's sense of the mystic relation between the world without us and the world within—the correspondence between the seen and the unseen—is expressed in its most general terms. But it is evident that such a conviction as this, if it contain any truth, cannot be barren of consequences on any level of thought. The communion with Nature which is capable of being at times sublimed to an incommunicable ecstasy must be capable also of explaining Nature to us so far as she can be explained; there must be *axiomata media* of natural religion; there must be something in the nature of poetic truths, standing midway between mystic intuition and delicate observation.

How rich Wordsworth is in these poetic truths—how illumining is the gaze which he turns on the commonest phenomena—how subtly and variously he shows us the soul's innate perceptions or inherited memories, as it were, co-operating with Nature and "half creating" the voice with which she speaks—all this can be learnt by attentive study alone. Only a few scattered samples can be given here; and I will begin with one on whose significance the poet has himself dwelt. This is the poem called *The Leech-Gatherer*, afterwards more formally named *Resolution and Independence*.

"I will explain to you," says Wordsworth, "in prose, my feelings in writing that poem. I describe myself as having been exalted to the highest pitch of delight by the joyousness and beauty of Nature; and then as depressed, even in the midst of those beautiful objects, to the lowest dejection and despair. A young poet in the midst of the happiness of Nature is described as overwhelmed by the thoughts of the miserable reverses which have befallen the happiest of all men, viz., poets. I think of this till I am so deeply impressed with it, that I consider the manner in which I am rescued from my dejection and despair almost as an interposition of Providence. A person reading the poem with feelings like mine will have been awed and controlled, expecting something spiritual or supernatural. What is brought forward? A lonely place, 'a pond, by which an old man *was*, far from all house or home;' not *stood*, nor *sat*, but *was*—the figure presented in the most naked simplicity possible. The feeling of spirituality or supernaturalness is again referred to as being strong in my mind in this passage. How

came he here? thought I, or what can he be doing? I then describe him, whether ill or well is not for me to judge with perfect confidence; but this I *can* confidently affirm, that though I believe God has given me a strong imagination, I cannot conceive a figure more impressive than that of an old man like this, the survivor of a wife and ten children, travelling alone among the mountains and all lonely places, carrying with him his own fortitude, and the necessities which an unjust state of society has laid upon him. You speak of his speech as tedious. Everything is tedious when one does not read with the feelings of the author. *The Thorn* is tedious to hundreds; and so is *The Idiot Boy* to hundreds. It is in the character of the old man to tell his story, which an impatient reader must feel tedious. But, good heavens! such a figure, in such a place; a pious, self-respecting, miserably infirm and pleased old man, telling such a tale!"

The näive earnestness of this passage suggests to us how constantly recurrent in Wordsworth's mind were the two trains of ideas which form the substance of the poem; the interaction, namely (if so it may be termed), of the moods of Nature with the moods of the human mind; and the dignity and interest of man as man, depicted with no complex background of social or political life, but set amid the primary affections and sorrows, and the wild aspects of the external world.

Among the pictures which Wordsworth has left us of the influence of Nature on human character, *Peter Bell* may be taken as marking one end, and the poems on *Lucy* the other end of the scale. Peter Bell lives in the face of Nature untouched alike by her terror and her charm; Lucy's whole being is moulded by Nature's self; she is responsive to sun and shadow, to silence and to sound, and melts almost into an impersonation of a Cumbrian valley's peace Between these two extremes how many are the possible shades of feeling! In *Ruth*, for instance, the point impressed upon us is that Nature's influence is only salutary so long as she is herself, so to say, in keeping with man; that when her operations reach that degree of habitual energy and splendour at which our love for her passes into fascination and our admiration into bewilderment, then the fierce and irregular stimulus consorts no longer with the growth of a temperate virtue·

> "The wind, the tempest roaring high,
> The tumult of a tropic sky,
> Might well be dangerous food
> For him, a youth to whom was given
> So much of earth, so much of heaven,
> And such impetuous blood."

And a contrasting touch recalls the healing power of those gentle and familiar presences which came to Ruth in her stormy madness with visitations of momentary calm:

"Yet sometimes milder hours she knew,
Nor wanted sun, nor rain, nor dew,
Nor pastimes of the May;
They all were with her in her cell;
And a wild brook with cheerful knell
Did o'er the pebbles play."

I will give one other instance of this subtle method of dealing with the contrasts in nature. It is from the poem entitled "*Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree which stands near the Lake of Esthwaite, on a desolate part of the Shore, commanding a beautiful Prospect.*" This seat was once the haunt of a lonely, a disappointed, an embittered man.

"Stranger! these gloomy boughs
Had charms for him; and here he loved to sit,
His only visitants a straggling sheep,
The stone-chat, or the glancing sand-piper;
And on these barren rocks, with fern and heath
And juniper and thistle sprinkled o'er,
Fixing his downcast eye, he many an hour
A morbid pleasure nourished, tracing here
An emblem of his own unfruitful life;
And, lifting up his head, he then would gaze
On the more distant scene—how lovely 'tis
Thou seest—and he would gaze till it became
Far lovelier, and his heart could not contain
The beauty, still more beauteous! Nor, that time,
When Nature had subdued him to herself,
Would he forget those beings, to whose minds,
Warm from the labours of benevolence,
The world, and human life, appeared a scene
Of kindred loveliness; then he would sigh
With mournful joy, to think that others felt
What he must never feel: and so, lost Man!
On visionary views would fancy feed
Till his eyes streamed with tears."

This is one of the passages which the lover of Wordsworth quotes, perhaps, with some apprehension; not knowing how far it carries into the hearts of others its affecting power: how vividly it calls up before them that mood of desolate loneliness when the whole vision of human love and joy hangs like a mirage in the air, and only when it seems irrecoverably distant seems also intolerably dear. But, however this particular passage may impress the reader, it is not hard to illustrate by abundant references the potent originality of Wordsworth's outlook on the external world.

There was indeed no aspect of nature, however often depicted, in which his seeing eye could not discern some unnoted quality; there was no mood to which nature gave birth in the mind of man from which his meditation could not disengage some element which threw light on our inner being. How often has the approach of

evening been described! and how mysterious is its solemnising power! Yet it was reserved for Wordsworth, in his sonnet, "Hail, Twilight, sovereign of one peaceful hour," to draw out a characteristic of that grey waning light which half explains to us its sombre and pervading charm. "Day's mutable distinctions" pass away; all in the landscape that suggests our own age or our own handiwork is gone; we look on the sight seen by our remote ancestors, and the visible present is generalised into an immeasurable past.

The sonnet on the Duddon beginning "What aspect bore the Man who roved or fled First of his tribe to this dark dell?" carries back the mind along the same track, with the added thought of Nature's permanent gentleness amid the "hideous usages" of primeval man—through all which the stream's voice was innocent, and its flow benign. "A weight of awe not easy to be borne" fell on the poet, also, as he looked on the earliest memorials which these remote ancestors have left us. The *Sonnet on a Stone-Circle* which opens with these words is conceived in a strain of emotion never more needed than now—when Abury itself owes its preservation to the munificence of a private individual—when stone-circle or round-tower, camp or dolmen, are destroyed to save a few shillings, and occupation-roads are mended with the immemorial altars of an unknown God. "Speak, Giant-mother! tell it to the Morn!"—how strongly does the heart re-echo the solemn invocation which calls on those abiding witnesses to speak once of what they knew long ago!

The mention of these ancient worships may lead us to ask in what manner Wordsworth was affected by the Nature-deities of Greece and Rome—impersonations which have preserved through so many ages so strange a charm. And space must be found here for the characteristic sonnet in which the baseness and materialism of modern life drives him back on whatsoever of illumination and reality lay in that young ideal.

"The world is too much with us; late and soon,
  Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
  Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
  The Winds that will be howling at all hours,
  And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
  A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
  Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea:
  Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn."

Wordsworth's own imagination idealised Nature in a different way. The sonnet "Brook! whose society the poet seeks" places him among the men whose Nature-deities have not yet become

anthropomorphic—men to whom "unknown modes of being" may seem more lovely as well as more awful than the life we know. He would not give to his idealised brook "human cheeks, channels for tears--no Naiad shouldst thou be"—

> "It seems the Eternal Soul is clothed in thee
> With purer robes than those of flesh and blood,
> And hath bestowed on thee a better good;
> Unwearied joy, and life without its cares."

And in the *Sonnet on Calais Beach* the sea is regarded in the same way, with a sympathy (if I may so say) which needs no help from an imaginary impersonation, but strikes back to a sense of kinship which seems antecedent to the origin of man.

> "It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free;
> The holy time is quiet as a Nun
> Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
> Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
> The gentleness of heaven is on the Sea:
> Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
> And doth with his eternal motion make
> A sound like thunder—everlastingly."

A comparison, made by Wordsworth himself, of his own method of observing Nature with Scott's expresses in less mystical language something of what I am endeavouring to say.

"He expatiated much to me one day," says Mr. Aubrey de Vere, "as we walked among the hills above Grasmere, on the mode in which Nature had been described by one of the most justly popular of England's modern poets—one for whom he preserved a high and affectionate respect. 'He took pains,' Wordsworth said; 'he went out with his pencil and note-book, and jotted down whatever struck him most—a river rippling over the sands, a ruined tower on a rock above it, a promontory, and a mountain-ash waving with its berries. He went home and wove the whole together into a poetical description.' After a pause, Wordsworth resumed, with a flashing eye and impassioned voice: 'But Nature does not permit an inventory to be made of her charms! He should have left his pencil and note-book at home, fixed his eye as he walked with a reverent attention on all that surrounded him, and taken all into a heart that could understand and enjoy. Then, after several days had passed by, he should have interrogated his memory as to the scene. He would have discovered that, while much of what he had admired was preserved to him, much was also most wisely obliterated; that which remained—the picture surviving in his mind—would have presented the ideal and essential truth of the scene, and done so in a large part by discarding much which, though in itself striking, was not characteristic. In every scene many of the most brilliant details are but accidental: a true eye for Nature does not note them, or at least does not dwell on them.'"

How many a phrase of Wordsworth's rises in the mind in illustration of this power! phrases which embody in a single picture,

or a single image—it may be the vivid wildness of the flowery coppice, of

> "Flaunting summer, when he throws
> His soul into the briar-rose"—

or the melancholy stillness of the declining year—

> "Where floats
> O'er twilight fields the autumnal gossamer;"

or, as in the words which to the sensitive Charles Lamb seemed too terrible for art, the irresponsive blankness of the universe—

> "The broad open eye of the solitary sky"—

beneath which mortal hearts must make what merriment they may.

Or take those typical stanzas in *Peter Bell*, which so long were accounted among Wordsworth's leading absurdities.

> "In vain through every changeful year
> Did Nature lead him as before;
> A primrose by the river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more.

> "In vain, through water, earth, and air,
> The soul of happy sound was spread,
> When Peter, on some April morn,
> Beneath the broom or budding thorn,
> Made the warm earth his lazy bed.

> "At noon, when by the forest's edge
> He lay beneath the branches high,
> The soft blue sky did never melt
> Into his heart—he never felt
> The witchery of the soft blue sky!

> "On a fair prospect some have looked
> And felt, as I have heard them say,
> As if the moving time had been
> A thing as steadfast as the scene
> On which they gazed themselves away."

In all these passages, it will be observed, the emotion is educed from Nature rather than added to her; she is treated as a mystic text to be deciphered, rather than as a stimulus to roving imagination. This latter mood, indeed, Wordsworth feels occasionally, as in the sonnet where the woodland sights become to him "like a dream of the whole world;" but it is checked by the recurring sense that "it is our business to idealise the real, and not to realise the ideal." Absorbed in admiration of fantastic clouds of sunset, he feels for a moment ashamed to think that they are unrememberable—

"They are of the sky,
And from our earthly memory fade away."

But soon he disclaims this regret, and reasserts the paramount interest of the things that we can grasp and love:

"Grove, isle, with every shape of sky-built dome,
Though clad in colours beautiful and pure,
Find in the heart of man no natural home:
The immortal Mind craves objects that endure:
These cleave to it; from these it cannot roam,
Nor they from it: their fellowship is secure."

From this temper of Wordsworth's mind, it follows that there will be many moods in which we shall not retain him as our companion. Moods which are rebellious, which beat at the bars of fate; moods of passion reckless in its vehemence, and assuming the primacy of all other emotions through the intensity of its delight or pain; moods of mere imaginative phantasy, when we would fain shape from the well-worn materials of our thought some fabric at once beautiful and new; from all such phases of our inward being Wordsworth stands aloof. His poem on the nightingale and the stock-dove illustrates with half-conscious allegory the contrast between himself and certain other poets.

"O Nightingale! thou surely art
A creature of a fiery heart;
These notes of thine—they pierce and pierce;
Tumultuous harmony and fierce!
Thou sing'st as if the God of wine
Had helped thee to a Valentine;
A song in mockery and despite
Of shades, and dews, and silent Night;
And steady bliss, and all the loves
Now sleeping in their peaceful groves.

"I heard a Stock-dove sing or say
His homely tale, this very day;
His voice was buried among trees,
Yet to be come at by the breeze:
He did not cease; but cooed—and cooed,
And somewhat pensively he wooed.
He sang of love with quiet blending,
Slow to begin, and never ending;
Of serious faith and inward glee;
That was the Song—the Song for me!"

"*His voice was buried among trees*," says Wordsworth; "a metaphor expressing the love of *seclusion* by which this bird is marked; and characterising its note as not partaking of the shrill and the piercing, and therefore more easily deadened by the intervening shade; yet a note so peculiar, and withal so pleasing, that the breeze, gifted with that love of the sound which the poet feels,

penetrates the shade in which it is entombed, and conveys it to the ear of the listener."

Wordsworth's poetry on the emotional side (as distinguished from its mystical or its patriotic aspects) could hardly be more exactly described than in the above sentence. For while there are few poems of his which could be read to a mixed audience with the certainty of producing an immediate impression; yet, on the other hand, all the best ones gain in an unusual degree by repeated study; and this is especially the case with those in which some touch of tenderness is enshrined in a scene of beauty, which it seems to interpret, while it is itself exalted by it. Such a poem is *Stepping Westward*, where the sense of sudden fellowship, and the quaint greeting beneath the glowing sky, seem to link man's momentary wanderings with the cosmic spectacles of heaven. Such are the lines where all the wild romance of Highland scenery, the forlornness of the solitary vales, pours itself through the lips of the maiden singing at her work, "as if her song could have no ending"—

> "Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
> And sings a melancholy strain;
> O listen! for the Vale profound
> Is overflowing with the sound."

Such—and with how subtle a difference!—is the *Fragment* in which a "Spirit of noonday" wears on his face the silent joy of Nature in her own recesses, undisturbed by beast, or bird, or man—

> "Nor ever was a cloudless sky
> So steady or so fair."

And such are the poems—*We are Seven*, *The Pet Lamb*,* *Louisa*, *The Two April Mornings*—in which the beauty of rustic children melts, as it were, into Nature herself, and the

> "Blooming girl whose hair was wet
> With points of morning dew"

becomes the impersonation of the season's early joy. We may apply, indeed, to all these girls Wordsworth's description of leverets playing on a lawn, and call them—

> "Separate creatures in their several gifts
> Abounding, but so fashioned that in all

* The *Pet Lamb* is probably the only poem of Wordsworth's which can be charged with having done moral injury, and that to a single individual alone. "Barbara Lewthwaite," says Wordsworth, in 1843, "was not, in fact, the child whom I had seen and overheard as engaged in the poem. I chose the name for reasons implied in the above" (*i. e.*, an account of her remarkable beauty), "and will here add a caution against the use of names of living persons. Within a few months after the publication of this poem I was much surprised, and more hurt, to find it in a child's school-book, which, having been compiled by Lindley Murray, had come into use at Grasmere School, where Barbara was a pupil. And, alas, I had the mortification of hearing that she was very vain of being thus distinguished; and in after life she used to say that she remembered the incident, and what I said to her upon the occasion."

That Nature prompts them to display, their looks,
Their starts of motion and their fits of rest,
An undistinguishable style appears
And character of gladness, as if Spring
Lodged in their innocent bosoms, and the spirit
Of the rejoicing Morning were their own."

My limits forbid me to dwell longer on these points. The passages which I have been citing have been for the most part selected as illustrating the novelty and subtlety of Wordsworth's view of nature. But it will now be sufficiently clear how continually a strain of human interest is interwoven with the delight derived from impersonal things.

"Long have I loved what I behold,
The night that calms, the day that cheers:
The common growth of mother earth
Suffices me—her tears, her mirth,
Her humblest mirth and tears."

The poet of the *Waggoner*—who, himself a habitual water-drinker, has so glowingly described the glorification which the prospect of nature receives in a half-intoxicated brain—may justly claim that he can enter into all genuine pleasures, even of an order which he declines for himself. With anything that is false or artificial he cannot sympathise, nor with such faults as baseness, cruelty, rancour, which seem contrary to human nature itself; but in dealing with faults of mere *weakness* he is far less strait-laced than many less virtuous men.

He had, in fact. a reverence for human beings as such, which enabled him to face even their frailties without alienation; and there was something in his own happy exemption from such falls which touched him into regarding men less fortunate rather with pity than disdain:

"Because the unstained, the clear, the crystalline,
Have ever in them something of benign."

His comment on Burns's *Tam o' Shanter* will perhaps surprise some readers who are accustomed to think of him only in his didactic attitude.

"It is the privilegeof poetic genius," he says, "to catch, under certain restrictions of which, perhaps, at the time of its being exerted it is but dimly conscious, a spirit of pleasure wherever it can be found, in the walks of nature, and in the business of men. The poet, trusting to primary instincts, luxuriates among the felicities of love and wine, and is enraptured while he describes the fairer aspects of war, nor does he shrink from the company of the passion of love, though immoderate—from convivial pleasures, though intemperate—nor from the presence of war, though savage, and recognised as the handmaid of desolation. Frequently and admirably has Burns given way to these impulses of nature, both with reference to himself and in describing the condition of others. Who, but

some impenetrable dunce or narrow-minded puritan in works of art, ever read without delight the picture which he has drawn of the convivial exultation of the rustic adventurer, Tam o' Shanter? The poet fears not to tell the reader in the outset that his hero was a desperate and sottish drunkard, whose excesses were as frequent as his opportunities. This reprobate sits down to his cups while the storm is roaring, and heaven and earth are in confusion; the night is driven on by song and tumultuous noise, laughter and jest thicken as the beverage improves upon the palate—conjugal fidelity archly bends to the service of general benevolence—selfishness is not absent, but wearing the mask of social cordiality; and while these various elements of humanity are blended into one proud and happy composition of elated spirits, the anger of the tempest without doors only heightens and sets off the enjoyment within. I pity him who cannot perceive that in all this, though there was no moral purpose, there is a moral effect.

> "'Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
> O'er a' the *ills* of life victorious.'

What a lesson do these words convey of charitable indulgence for the vicious habits of the principal actor in the scene, and of those who resemble him! Men who to the rigidly virtuous are objects almost of loathing, and whom therefore they cannot serve! The poet, penetrating the unsightly and disgusting surfaces of things, has unveiled with exquisite skill the finer ties of imagination and feeling, that often bind these beings to practices productive of so much unhappiness to themselves, and to those whom it is their duty to cherish; and, as far as he puts the reader into possession of this intelligent sympathy, he qualifies him for exercising a salutary influence over the minds of those who are thus deplorably enslaved."

The reverence for man as man, the sympathy for him in his primary relations and his essential being, of which these comments on *Tam o' Shanter* form so remarkable an example, is a habit of thought too ingrained in all Wordsworth's works to call for specific illustration. The figures of *Michael*, of *Matthew*, of the *Brothers*, of the hero of the *Excursion*, and even of the *Idiot Boy*, suggest themselves at once in this connexion. But it should be noted in each case how free is the poet's view from any idealisation of the poorer classes as such, from the ascription of imaginary merits to an unknown populace which forms the staple of so much revolutionary eloquence. These poems, while they form the most convincing rebuke to the exclusive pride of the rich and great, are also a stern and strenuous incentive to the obscure and lowly. They are pictures of the poor man's life as it is—pictures as free as Crabbe's from the illusion of sentiment—but in which the delight of mere observation (which in Crabbe predominates) is subordinated to an intense sympathy with all such capacities of nobleness and tenderness as are called out by the stress and pressure of penury or woe. They form for the folk of northern England (as the works of Burns and Scott for the Scottish folk) a gallery of figures that are modelled, as it were, both from without and from within; by one with experience so personal as to keep every sentence vividly accurate, and yet with an insight which could draw from that simple

life lessons to itself unknown. We may almost venture to generalise our statement further, and to assert that no writer since Shakspeare has left us so true a picture of the British nation. In Milton, indeed, we have the characteristic English spirit at a whiter glow; but it is the spirit of the scholar only, or of the ruler, not of the peasant, the woman, or the child. Wordsworth gives us that spirit as it is diffused among shepherds and husbandmen—as it exists in obscurity and at peace. And they who know what makes the strength of nations need wish nothing better than that the temper which he saw and honoured among the Cumbrian dales should be the temper of all England, now and for ever.

Our discussion of Wordsworth's form of Natural Religion has led us back by no forced transition to the simple life which he described and shared. I return to the story of his later years—if that be called a story which derives no interest from incident or passion, and dwells only on the slow broodings of a meditative soul.

CHAPER XI.

ITALIAN TOUR.—ECCLESIASTICAL SONNETS.—POLITICAL VIEWS.—LAUREATESHIP.

WORDSWORTH was fond of travelling, and indulged this taste whenever he could afford it. Comparing himself and Southey, he says in 1843: "My lamented friend Southey used to say that, had he been a Papist, the course of life which in all probability would have been his was that of a Benedictine monk, in a convent furnished with an inexhaustible library. *Books* were, in fact, his passion; and *wandering*, I can with truth affirm, was mine; but this propensity in me was happily counteracted by inability from want of fortune to fulfil my wishes." We find him, however, frequently able to contrive a change of scene. His swift tour in 1790, his residence in France in 1791–2, his residence in Germany, 1798--9, have been already touched on. Then came a short visit to France in August, 1802, which produced the sonnets on Westminster Bridge and Calais Beach. The tour in Scotland which was so fertile in poetry took place in 1803. A second tour in Scotland, in 1814, produced the *Brownie's Cell* and a few other pieces. And in July, 1820, he set out with his wife and sister and two or three other friends for a tour through Switzerland and Italy.

This tour produced a good deal of poetry; and here and there are touches which recall the old inspiration. Such is the comparison of the clouds about the Engelberg to hovering angels; and such the description of the eclipse falling upon the population of statues which throng the pinnacles of Milan Cathedral. But for the most part the poems relating to this tour have an artificial look; the sentiments in the vale of Chamouni seem to have been laboriously summoned for the occasion; and the poet's admiration for the Italian maid and the Helvetian girl is a mere shadow of the old feeling for the Highland girl, to whom, in fact, he seems obliged to recur in order to give reality to his new emotion.

To conclude the subject of Wordsworth's travels, I will mention here that in 1823 he made a tour in Holland, and in 1824 in North Wales, where his sonnet to the torrent at the Devil's Bridge recalls the Swiss scenery seen in his youth with vigour and dignity. In 1828 he made another excursion in Belgium with Coleridge, and in 1829 he visited Ireland with his friend Mr. Marshall. Neither of these tours was productive. In 1831 he paid a visit with his

daughter to Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford, before his departure to seek health in Italy. Scott received them cordially, and had strength to take them to the Yarrow. "Of that excursion," says Wordsworth, "the verses *Yarrow Revisited* are a memorial. On our return in the afternoon we had to cross the Tweed, directly opposite Abbotsford. A rich but sad light, of rather a purple than a golden hue, was spread over the Eildon hills at that moment; and, thinking it probable that it might be the last time Sir Walter would cross the stream (the Tweed), I was not a little moved, and expressed some of my feelings in the sonnet beginning, *A trouble not of clouds nor weeping rain.* At noon on Thursday we left Abbotsford, and on the morning of that day Sir Walter and I had a serious conversation, *tete-à-tete*, when he spoke with gratitude of the happy life which, upon the whole, he had led. He had written in my daughter's album, before he came into the breakfast-room that morning, a few stanzas addressed to her; and, while putting the book into her hand, in his own study, standing by his desk, he said to her, in my presence, 'I should not have done anything of this kind but for your father's sake; they are probably the last verses I shall ever write.' They show how much his mind was impaired; not by the strain of thought, but by the execution, some of the lines being imperfect, and one stanza wanting corresponding rhymes. One letter, the initial S, had been omitted in the spelling of his own name."

There was another tour in Scotland in 1833, which produced *Memorials* of little poetic value. And in 1837 he made a long tour in Italy with Mr. Crabbe Robinson. But the poems which record this tour indicate a mind scarcely any longer susceptible to any vivid stimulus except from accustomed objects and ideas. The *Musings near Aquapendente* are musings on Scott and Helvellyn; the *Pine Tree of Monte Mario* is interesting because Sir George Beaumont has saved it from destruction; the *Cuckoo at Laverna* brings all childhood back into his heart. "I remember perfectly well," says Crabbe Robinson, "that I heard the cuckoo at Laverna twice before he heard it; and that it absolutely fretted him that my ear was first favoured: and that he exclaimed with delight, 'I hear it! I hear it!'" This was his last foreign tour; nor, indeed, are these tours very noticeable except as showing that he was not blindly wedded to his own lake scenery; that his admiration could face comparisons, and keep the same vividness when he was fresh from other orders of beauty.

The productions of these later years took for the most part a didactic rather than a descriptive form. In the volume entitled *Poems chiefly of Early and Later Years*, published in 1842, were many hortatory or ecclesiastical pieces of inferior merit, and among them various additions to the *Ecclesiastical Sketches*, a series of sonnets begun in 1821, but which he continued to enlarge, spending on them much of the energies of his later years. And although it is only in a few instances—as in the description of King's College, Cambridge—that these sonnets possess force or charm

enough to rank them high as poetry, yet they assume a certain value when we consider not so much their own adequacy as the greater inadequacy of all rival attempts in the same direction.

The Episcopalian Churchman, in this country or in the United States, will certainly nowhere find presented to him in poetical form so dignified and comprehensive a record of the struggles and the glories, of the vicissitudes and the edification, of the great body to which he belongs. Next to the Anglican liturgy, though next at an immense interval, these sonnets may take rank as the authentic exposition of her historic being—an exposition delivered with something of her own unadorned dignity, and in her moderate and tranquil tone.

I would not, however, seem to claim too much. The religion which these later poems of Wordsworth's embody is rather the stately tradition of a great Church than the pangs and aspirations of a holy soul. There is little in them, whether for good or evil, of the stuff of which a Paul, a Francis, a Dominic are made. That fervent emotion—akin to the passion of love rather than to intellectual or moral conviction—finds voice through singers of a very different tone. It is fed by an inward anguish and felicity which, to those who have not felt them, seem as causeless as a lover's moods; by wrestlings not with flesh and blood; by nights of despairing self-abasement; by ecstasies of an incommunicable peace. How great the gulf between Wordsworth and George Herbert!—Herbert "offering at heaven, growing and groaning thither"—and Wordsworth, for whom the gentle regret of the lines—

> "Me this unchartered freedom tires,
> I feel the weight of chance desires"—

forms his most characteristic expression of the self-judgment of the solitary soul.

Wordsworth accomplished one reconciliation of great importance to mankind. He showed, as plainly in his way as Socrates had shown it long ago, with what readiness a profoundly original conception of the scheme of things will shape itself into the mould of an established and venerable faith. He united the religion of the philosopher with the religion of the churchman; one rarer thing he could not do: he could not unite the religion of the philosopher with the religion of the saint. It is, indeed, evident that the most inspiring feeling which breathes through Wordsworth's ecclesiastical pieces is not of a doctrinal, not even of a spiritual kind. The ecclesiastical as well as the political sentiments of his later years are prompted mainly by the admiring love with which he regarded the structure of English society—seen as that society was by him in its simplest and most poetic aspect. This concrete attachment to the scenes about him had always formed an important element in his character. Ideal politics, whether in Church or State, had never occupied his mind, which sought rather to find its informing principles embodied in the England of his own day. The sonnet

On a Parsonage in Oxfordshire well illustrates the loving minuteness with which he draws out the beauty and fitness of the established scheme of things—the power of English country life to satisfy so many moods of feeling.

The country-seat of the English squire or nobleman has become—may we not say?—one of the world's chosen types of a happy and a stately home. And Wordsworth, especially in his poems which deal with Coleorton, has shown how deeply he felt the sway of such a home's hereditary majesty, its secure and tranquillising charm. Yet there are moods when the heart which deeply feels the inequality of human lots turns towards a humbler idea. There are moments when the broad park, the halls and towers seem no longer the fitting frame of human greatness, but rather an insolating solitude, and unfeeling triumph over the poor.

In such a mood of mind it will not always satisfy us to dwell, as Wordsworth has so often done, on the virtue and happiness that gather round a cottage hearth—which we must, after all, judge by a somewhat less exacting standard. We turn rather to the "refined rusticity" of an English Parsonage home—

> "Where holy ground begins, unhallowed ends,
> Is marked by no distinguishable line;
> The turf unites, the pathways intertwine"—

and the clergyman's abode has but so much of dignity as befits the minister of the Church which is the hamlet's centre; enough to suggest the old Athenian boast of beauty without extravagance, and study without effeminacy; enough to show that dwellings where not this life but another is the prevailing thought and care, yet need not lack the graces of culture nor the loves of home.

The sonnet on *Seathwaite Chapel*, and the life of Robert Walker, the incumbent of Seathwaite, which is given at length in notes to the sonnets on the Duddon, afford a still more characteristic instance of the clerical ideal towards which Wordsworth naturally turned. In Robert Walker he had a Cumbrian statesman turned into a practical saint; and he describes him with a gusto in which his laboured sonnets on *Laud* or on *Dissensions* are wholly deficient.

It was in social and political matters that the consequences of this idealising view of the facts around him in Cumberland were most apparent. Take education, for example. Wordsworth, as has been already stated, was one of the earliest and most impressive assertors of the national duty of teaching every English child to read. He insists on this with a prosaic earnestness which places several pages of the *Excursion* among what may be called the standing bugbears which his poems offer to the inexperienced reader. And yet as soon as, through the exertions of Bell and Lancaster, there seems to be some chance of really educating the poor, Dr. Bell, whom Coleridge fondly imagines as surrounded in heaven by multitudes of grateful angels, is to Wordsworth a name

of horror. The mistresses trained on his system are called "Dr Bell's sour-looking teachers in petticoats." And the instruction received in these new-fangled schools is compared to "the training that fits a boxer for victory in the ring." The reason of this apparent inconsistency is not far to seek. Wordsworth's eyes were fixed on the village life around him. Observation of that life impressed on him the imperative necessity of instruction in reading. But it was from a moral rather than an intellectual point of view that he regarded it as needful, and, this opening into the world of ideas once secured, he held that the cultivation of the home affections and home duties was all that was needed beyond. And thus the Westmoreland dame, "in her summer seat in the garden, and in winter by the fireside," was elevated into the unexpected position of the ideal instructress of youth.

Conservatism of this kind could provoke nothing but a sympathetic smile. The case was different when the same conservative —even retrogade—tendency showed itself on subjects on which party-feeling ran high. A great part of the meditative energy of Wordsworth's later years was absorbed by questions towards whose solution he contributed no new element, and which filled him with disproportionate fears. And some injustice has been done to his memory by those who have not fully realised the predisposing causes which were at work—the timidity of age, and the deep-rooted attachment to the England which he knew.

I speak of age, perhaps, somewhat prematurely, as the poet's gradually growing conservatism culminated in his opposition to the Catholic Relief Bill before he was sixty years old. But there is nothing to wonder at in the fact that the mind of a man of brooding and solitary habits should show traces of advancing age earlier than is the case with statesmen or men of the world, who are obliged to keep themselves constantly alive to the ideas of the generation that is rising around them. A deadness to new impressions, an unwillingness to make intellectual efforts in fresh directions, a tendency to travel the same mental pathways over and over again, and to wear the ruts of prejudice deeper at every step; such traces of age as these undoubtedly manifested themselves in the way in which the poet confronted the great series of changes—Catholic Emancipation, Reform Bill, New Poor Law—on which England entered about the year 1829. "My sixty-second year," Wordsworth writes, in 1832, "will soon be completed; and though I have been favoured thus far in health and strength beyond most men of my age, yet I feel its effects upon my spirits; they sink under a pressure of apprehension to which, at an earlier period of my life, they would probably have been superior." To this it must be added that the increasing weakness of the poet's eyes seriously limited his means of information. He had never read much contemporary literature, and he read less than ever now. He had no fresh or comprehensive knowledge of the general condition of the country, and he really believed in the prognostication which was uttered by many also who did *not* believe in it, that with the Re-

form Bill the England which he knew and loved would practically disappear. But there was nothing in him of the angry polemic, nothing of the calumnious partisan. One of the houses where Mr. Wordsworth was most intimate and most welcome was that of a reforming member of Parliament, who was also a manufacturer, thus belonging to the two classes for which the poet had the greatest abhorrence. But the intimacy was never for a moment shaken, and, indeed, in that house Mr. Wordsworth expounded the ruinous tendency of Reform and manufactures with even unusual copiousness, on account of the admiring affection with which he felt himself surrounded. The tone in which he spoke was never such as could give pain or excite antagonism; and—if I may be pardoned for descending to a detail which well illustrates my position—the only rejoinder which these diatribes provoked was that the poet on his arrival was sometimes decoyed into uttering them to the younger members of the family, whose time was of less value, so as to set his mind free to return to those topics of more permanent interest where his conversation kept to the last all that tenderness, nobility, wisdom, which in that family, as in many others familiar with the celebrated persons of that day, won for him a regard and a reverence such as was accorded to no other man.

To those, indeed, who realised how deeply he felt these changes—how profoundly his notion of national happiness was bound up with a lovely and vanishing ideal—the prominent reflection was that the hopes and principles which maintained through all an underlying hope and trust in the future must have been potent indeed. It was no easy optimism which promoted the lines written in 1837—one of his latest utterances—in which he speaks to himself with strong self-judgment and resolute hope. On reading them one shrinks from dwelling longer upon an old man's weakness and a brave man's fears.

> "If this great world of joy and pain
> Revolve in one sure track;
> If Freedom, set, revive again,
> And Virtue, flown, come back—
>
> "Woe to the purblind crew who fill
> The heart with each day's care,
> Nor learn, from past and future, skill
> To bear and to forbear."

The poet had also during these years more of private sorrow than his tranquil life had for a long time experienced. In 1832 his sister had a most serious illness, which kept her for many months in a state of great prostration, and left her, when the physical symptoms abated, with her intellect painfully impaired, and her bright nature permanently overclouded. Coleridge, too, was nearing his end. "He and my beloved sister," writes Wordsworth, in 1832, "are the two beings to whom my intellect is most indebted, and they are now proceeding, as it were, *pari passu*, along the path

of sickness, I will not say towards the grave, but I trust towards a blessed immortality."

In July, 1834, "every mortal power of Coleridge was frozen at its marvellous source." And although the early intimacy had scarcely been maintained—though the "comfortless and hidden well" had, for a time at least, replaced the "living murmuring fount of love" which used to spring beside Wordsworth's door—yet the loss was one which the surviving poet deeply felt. Coleridge was the only contemporary man of letters with whom Wordsworth's connexion had been really close; and when Wordsworth is spoken of as one of a group of poets exemplifying in various ways the influence of the Revolution, it is not always remembered how very little he had to do with the other famous men of his time. Scott and Southey were valued friends, but he thought little of Scott's poetry, and less of Southey's. Byron and Shelley he seems scarcely to have read; and there is nothing to show that he had ever heard of Keats. But to Coleridge his mind constantly reverted; he called him "the most wonderful man he had ever known," and he kept him as the ideal auditor of his own poems, long after Coleridge had listened to the *Prelude*—

> "A song divine of high and passionate thoughts
> To their own music chanted."

In 1836, moreover, died one for whom Coleridge, as well as Wordsworth, had felt a very high respect and regard—Sarah Hutchinson, Mrs. Wordsworth's sister, and long the inmate of Wordsworth's household. This most valued friend had been another instance of the singular good fortune which attended Wordsworth in his domestic connexions: and when she was laid in Grasmere churchyard, the stone above her tomb expressed the wish of the poet and his wife that, even as her remains were laid beside their dead children's, so their own bodies also might be laid by hers.

And now, while the inner circle of friends and relations began to pass away, the outer circle of admirers was rapidly spreading. Between the years 1830 and 1840 Wordsworth passed from the apostle of a clique into the most illustrious man of letters in England. The rapidity of this change was not due to any remarkable accident, nor to the appearance of any new work of genius. It was merely an extreme instance of what must always occur where an author, running counter to the fashion of his age, has to create his own public in defiance of the established critical powers. The disciples whom he draws round him are for the most part young; the established authorities are for the most part old; so that by the time that the original poet is about sixty years old, most of his admirers will be about forty, and most of his critics will be dead. His admirers now become his accredited critics; his works are widely introduced to the public; and if they are really good his reputation is secure. In Wordsworth's case the detractors had been unusually persistent, and the reaction, when it came, was there-

fore unusually violent; it was even somewhat factitious in its extent; and the poems were forced by enthusiasts upon a public which was only half ripe for them. After the poet's death a temporary counter-reaction succeeded, and his fame is only now finding its permanent level.

Among the indications of growing popularity was the publication of an American edition of Wordsworth's poems in 1837, by Professor Reed, of Philadelphia. with whom the poet interchanged many letters of interest. "The acknowledgments," he says, in one of these, "which I receive from the vast continent of America are among the most grateful that reach me. What a vast field is there open to the English mind, acting through our noble language! Let us hope that our authors of true genius will not be unconscious of that thought, or inattentve to the duty which it imposes upon them, of doing their utmost to instruct, to purify, and to elevate their readers."

But of all the manifestations of the growing honour in which Wordsworth was held, none was more marked or welcome than the honorary degree of D.C.L. conferred on him by the University of Oxford in the summer of 1839. Keble, as Professor of Poetry, introduced him in words of admiring reverence, and the enthusiasm of the audience was such as had never been evoked in that place before, "except upon the occasions of the visits of the Duke of Wellington." The collocation was an interesting one. The special claim advanced for Wordsworth by Keble in his Latin oration was "that he had shed a celestial light upon the affections, the occupations, the piety of the poor." And to many men besides the author of the *Christian Year* it seemed that this striking scene was, as it were. another visible triumph of the temper of mind which is of the essence of Christianity; a recognition that one spirit more had become as a little child, and had entered into the kingdom of heaven.

In October, 1842, another token of public respect was bestowed on him in the shape of an annuity of 300*l.* a year from the Civil List for distinguished literary merit. "I need scarcely add," says Sir Robert Peel, in making the offer, "that the acceptance by you of this mark of favour from the Crown, considering the grounds on which it is proposed, will impose no restraint upon your perfect independence, and involve no obligation of a personal nature." In March, 1843, came the death of Southey, and in a few days Wordsworth received a letter from Earl De la Warr, the Lord Chamberlain, offering him, in the most courteous terms, the office of Poet Laureate, which, however, he respectfully declined as imposing duties "which, far advanced in life as I am, I cannot venture to undertake."

This letter brought a reply from the Lord Chamberlain, pressing the office on him again, and a letter from Sir Robert Peel which gave dignified expression to the national feeling in the matter. "The offer," he says. "was made to you by the Lord Chamberlain, with my entire concurrence, not for the purpose of imposing on you

any onerous or disagreeable duties, but in order to pay you that tribute of respect which is justly due to the first of living poets. The Queen entirely approved of the nomination, and there is one unanimous feeling on the part of all who have heard of the proposal (and it is pretty generally known) that there could not be a question about the selection. Do not be deterred by the fear of any obligations which the appointment may be supposed to imply. I will undertake that you shall have nothing *required* from you. But as the Queen can select for this honourable appointment no one whose claims for respect and honour, on account of eminence as a poet, can be placed in competition with yours, I trust you will not longer hesitate to accept it."

This letter overcame the aged poet's scruples; and he filled with silent dignity the post of Laureate till, after seven years' space, a worthy successor received

> "This laurel greener from the brows
> Of him that uttered nothing base."

CHAPTER XII.

LETTERS ON THE KENDAL AND WINDERMERE RAILWAY.—CONCLUSION.

WORDSWORTH'S appointment to the Laureateship was significant in more ways than one. He was so much besides a poet, that his appointment implied something of a national recognition, not only of his past poetical achievements, but of the substantial truth of that body of principles which through many years of neglect and ridicule he had consistently supported. There was, therefore, nothing incongruous in the fact that the only composition of any importance which Wordsworth produced after he became Laureate was in prose—his two letters on the projected Kendal and Windermere railway, 1844. No topic, in fact, could have arisen on which the veteran poet could more fitly speak with whatever authority his official spokesmanship of the nation's higher life could give, for it was a topic with every aspect of which he was familiar; and so far as the extension of railways through the Lake country was defended on grounds of popular benefit (and not merely of commercial advantage) no one, certainly, had shown himself more capable of estimating at their full value such benefits as were here proposed.

The results which follow on a large incursion of visitors into the Lake country may be considered under two heads, as affecting the residents, or as affecting the visitors themselves. And first as to the residents. Of the wealthier class of these I say nothing, as it will perhaps be thought that their inconvenience is outweighed by the possible profits which the railway may bring to speculators or contractors. But the effect produced on the poorer residents—on the peasantry—is a serious matter, and the danger which was distantly foreseen by Wordsworth has since his day assumed grave proportions. And lest the poet's estimate of the simple virtue which is thus jeopardised should be suspected of partiality, it may be allowable to corroborate it by the testimony of an eminent man not a native of the district, though a settler therein in later life, and whose writings, perhaps, have done more than any man's since Wordsworth to increase the sum of human enjoyment derived both from Art and from Nature.

"The Border peasantry of Scotland and England," says Mr. Ruskin,* "painted with absolute fidelity by Scott and Wordsworth

* *A Protest against the Extension of Railways in the Lake District.*—Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1876.

(for leading types out of this exhaustless portraiture, I may name Dandie Dinmont, and Michael), are hitherto a scarcely injured race; whose strength and virtue yet survive to represent the body and soul of England, before her days of mechanical decrepitude and commercial dishonour. There are men working in my own fields who might have fought with Henry the Fifth at Agincourt, without being discerned from among his knights; I can take my tradesmen's word for a thousand pounds; my garden gate opens on the latch to the public road, by day and night, without fear of any foot entering but my own; and my girl-guests may wander by road or moorland, or through every bosky dell of this wild wood, free as the heather-bees or squirrels. What effect on the character of such a population will be produced by the influx of that of the suburbs of our manufacturing towns there is evidence enough, if the reader cares to ascertain the facts, in every newspaper on his morning table."

There remains the question of how the greatest benefit is to be secured to visitors to the country, quite apart from the welfare of its more permanent inhabitants. At first sight this question seems to present a problem of a well-known order—to find the point of maximum pleasure to mankind in a case where the intensity of the pleasure varies inversely as its extension—where each fresh person who shares it diminishes *pro tanto* the pleasure of the rest. But, as Wordsworth has pointed out, this is not in reality the question here. To the great mass of cheap excursionists the characteristic scenery of the Lakes is in itself hardly a pleasure at all. The pleasure, indeed, which they derive from contact with Nature is great and important, but it is one which could be offered to them, not only as well but much better, near their own homes.

"It is benignly ordained that green fields, clear blue skies, running streams of pure water, rich groves and woods, orchards, and all the ordinary varieties of rural nature should find an easy way to the affections of all men. But a taste beyond this, however desirable it may be that every one should possess it, is not to be implanted at once; it must be gradually developed both in nations and individuals. Rocks and mountains, torrents and wide-spread waters, and all those features of nature which go to the composition of such scenes as this part of England is distinguished for, cannot, in their finer relations to the human mind, be comprehended, or even very imperfectly conceived, without processes of culture or opportunities of observation in some degree habitual. In the eye of thousands and tens of thousands, a rich meadow, with fat cattle grazing upon it, or the sight of what they would call a heavy crop of corn, is worth all that the Alps and Pyrenees in their utmost grandeur and beauty could show to them; and it is noticeable what trifling conventional prepossessions will, in common minds, not only preclude pleasure from the sight of natural beauty, but will even turn it into an object of disgust. In the midst of a small pleasure-ground immediately below my house rises a detached rock, equally remarkable for the beauty of its form, the ancient oaks that grow out of it, and the flowers and shrubs which adorn it. 'What a nice place would this be,' said a Manchester tradesman, pointing to the rock, 'if that ugly lump were but out of the way.' Men as little advanced in

the pleasure which such objects give to others are so far from being rare that they may be said fairly to represent a large majority of mankind. This is the fact, and none but the deceiver and the willingly deceived can be offended by its being stated."

And, since this is so, the true means of raising the taste of the masses consists, as Wordsworth proceeds to point out, in giving them—not a few hurried glimpses of what is above their comprehension, but permanent opportunities of learning at leisure the first great lessons which Nature has to teach. Since he wrote thus our towns have spread their blackness wider still, and the provision of parks for the recreation of our urban population has become a pressing national need. And here, again, the very word *recreation* suggests another unfitness in the Lake country for these purposes. Solitude is as characteristic of that region as beauty, and what the mass of mankind need for their refreshment—most naturally and justly—is not solitude but society.

> "The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills,"

is to them merely a drawback, to be overcome by moving about in large masses, and by congregating in chosen resorts with vehement hilarity. It would be most unreasonable to wish to curtail the social expansion of men whose lives are for the most part passed in a monotonous round of toil. But is it kinder and wiser—from any point of view but the railway shareholder's—to allure them into excursion trains by the prestige of a scenery which is to them (as it was to all classes a century or two ago) at best indifferent, or to provide them near at hand with their needed space for rest and play, not separated from their homes by hours of clamour and crowding, nor broken up by barren precipices, nor drenched with sweeping storm?

Unquestionably it is the masses whom we have first to consider. Sooner than that the great mass of the dwellers in towns should be debarred from the influences of Nature—sooner than that they should continue for another century to be debarred as now they are—it might be better that Cumbrian statesmen and shepherds should be turned into innkeepers and touts, and that every poet, artist, dreamer in England should be driven to seek his solitude at the North Pole. But it is the mere futility of sentiment to pretend that there need be any real collision of interests here. There is space enough in England yet for all to enjoy in their several manners, if those who have the power would leave some unpolluted rivers, and some unblighted fields, for the health and happiness of the factory-hand, whose toil is for their fortunes, and whose degradation is their shame.

Wordsworth, while indicating, with some such reasoning as this, the true method of promoting the education of the mass of men in natural joys, was assuredly not likely to forget that in every class, even the poorest, are found exceptional spirits which some inbred

power has attuned already to the stillness and glory of the hills. In what way the interests of such men may best be consulted, he has discussed in the following passage:

> " 'O Nature, a' thy shows an' forms
> To feeling pensive hearts hae charms.

So exclaimed the Ayrshire ploughman, speaking of ordinary rural nature under the varying influences of the seasons; and the sentiment has found an echo in the bosoms of thousands in as humble a condition as he himself was when he gave vent to it. But then they *were* feeling, pensive hearts—men who would be among the first to lament the facility with which they had approached this region, by a sacrifice of so much of its quiet and beauty, as, from the intrusion of a railway, would be inseparable. What can, in truth, be more absurd than that either rich or poor should be spared the trouble of travelling by the high roads over so short a space, according to their respective means, if the unavoidable consequence must be a great disturbance of the retirement, and, in many places, a destruction of the beauty, of the country which the parties are come in search of? Would not this be pretty much like the child's cutting up his drum to learn where the sound came from?"

The truth of these words has become more conspicuous since Wordsworth's day. The Lake country is now both engirdled and intersected with railways. The point to which even the poorest of genuine lovers of the mountains could desire that his facilities of cheap locomotion should be carried has not only reached but far overpassed. If he is not content to dismount from his railway carriage at Coniston, or Seascale, or Bowness—at Penrith, or Troutbeck, or Keswick—and to move at eight miles an hour in a coach, or at four miles an hour on foot, while he studies that small intervening tract of country, of which every mile is a separate gem—when, we may ask, *is* he to dismount? what *is* he to study? Or is nothing to be expected from nature but a series of dissolving views?

It is impossible to feel sanguine as to the future of this irreplaceable national possession. A real delight in scenery—apart from the excitements of sport or mountaineering, for which Scotland and Switzerland are better suited than Cumberland—is still too rare a thing among the wealthier as among the poorer classes to be able to compete with such a power as the Railway Interest. And it is little likely now that the Government of England should act with regard to this district as the Government of the United States has acted with regard to the Yosemite and Yellowstone valleys, and guard as a national possession the beauty which will become rarer and more precious with every generation of men. But it is in any case desirable that Wordsworth's unanswered train of reasoning on the subject should be kept in view—that it should be clearly understood that the one argument for making more railways

through the Lakes is that they may possibly pay; while it is certain that each railway extension is injurious to the peasantry of the district, and to all visitors who really care for its scenery, while conferring no benefit on the crowds who are dragged many miles to what they do not enjoy, instead of having what they really want secured to them, as it ought to be, at their own doors.

It is probable that all this will continue to be said in vain. Railways, and mines, and waterworks will have their way, till injury has become destruction. The natural sanctuary of England, the nurse of simple and noble natures, "the last region which Astræa touches with flying feet," will be sacrificed—it is scarcely possible to doubt it—to the greed of gain. We must seek our consolation in the thought that no outrage on nature is mortal; that the ever-springing affections of men create for themselves continually some fresh abode, and inspire some new landscape with a consecrating history, and, as it were, with a silent soul. Yet it will be long ere round some other lakes, upon some other hill, shall cluster memories as pure and high as those which hover still around Rydal and Grasmere, and on Helvellyn's windy summit, "and by Glenridding Screes and low Glencoign."

With this last word of protest and warning—uttered, as it may seem to the reader, with unexpected force and conviction from out of the tranquillity of a serene old age—Wordsworth's mission is concluded. The prophecy of his boyhood is fulfilled, and the "dear native regions" whence his dawning genius rose have been gilded by the last ray of its declining fire. There remains but the domestic chronicle of a few more years of mingled sadness and peace. And I will first cite a characteristic passage from a letter to his American correspondent, Mr. Reed, describing his presentation as Laureate to the Queen:

"The reception given me by the Queen at her ball was most gracious. Mrs. Everett, the wife of your Minister, among many others, was a witness to it, without knowing who I was. It moved her to the shedding of tears. This effect was in part produced, I suppose, by American habits of feeling, as pertaining to a republican government. To see a gray-haired man of seventy-five years of age kneeling down in a large assembly to kiss the hand of a young woman is a sight for which institutions essentially democratic do not prepare a spectator of either sex, and must naturally place the opinions upon which a republic is founded, and the sentiments which support it, in strong contrast with a government based and upheld as ours is."

In the same letter the poet introduces an ominous allusion to the state of his daughter's health. Dora, his only daughter who survived childhood, was the darling of Wordsworth s age. In her wayward gaiety and bright intelligence there was much to remind him of his sister's youth; and his clinging nature wound itself round this new Dora as tenderly as it had ever done round her who was now only the object of loving compassion and care. In 1841 Dora Wordsworth married Mr. Quillinan, an ex-officer of the

Guards, and a man of great literary taste and some original power. In 1821 he had settled for a time in the vale of Rydal, mainly for the sake of Wordsworth's society; and ever since then he had been an intimate and valued friend. He had been married before, but his wife died in 1822, leaving him two daughters, one of whom was named from the murmuring Rotha, and was god-child of the poet. Shortly after marriage, Dora Quillinan's health began to fail. In 1845 the Quillinans went to Oporto in search of health, and returned in 1846, in the trust that it was regained. But in July, 1847, Dora Quillinan died at Rydal, and left her father to mourn for his few remaining years his "immeasurable loss."

The depth and duration of Wordsworth's grief, in such bereavements as fell to his lot, was such as to make his friends thankful that his life had, on the whole, been guided through ways of so profound a peace.

Greatly, indeed, have they erred who have imagined him as cold, or even as by nature tranquil. "What strange workings," writes one from Rydal Mount, when the poet was in his sixty-ninth year—"what strange workings are there in his great mind! How fearfully strong are all his feelings and affections! If his intellect had been less powerful they must have destroyed him long ago." Such, in fact, was the impression which he gave to those who knew him best throughout life. The look of premature age, which De Quincey insists on; the furrowed and rugged countenance, the brooding intensity of the eye, the bursts of anger at the report of evil doings, the lonely and violent roamings over the mountains —all told of a strong absorption and a smothered fire. His own description of himself, in his *Imitation of the Castle of Indolence*, unexpected as it is by the ordinary reader, carries for those who knew him the stamp of truth:

"Full many a time, upon a stormy night,
His voice came to us from the neighbouring height:
Oft did we see him driving full in view
At mid-day when the sun was shining bright;
What ill was on him, what he had to do,
A mighty wonder bred among our quiet crew.

Ah! piteous sight it was to see this Man
When he came back to us, a withered flower—
Or like a sinful creature, pale and wan.
Down would he sit; and without strength or power
Look at the common grass from hour to hour:
And oftentimes, how long I fear to say,
Where apple-trees in blossom made a bower,
Retired in that sunshiny shade he lay;
And, like a naked Indian, slept himself away.

Great wonder to our gentle tribe it was
Whenever from our valley he withdrew;
For happier soul no living creature has
Than he had, being here the long day through.

Some thought he was a lover, and did woo:
Some thought far worse of him, and judged him wrong:
But Verse was what he had been wedded to;
And his own mind did like a tempest strong
Come to him thus, and drove the weary wight along."

An excitement which vents itself in bodily exercise carries its own sedative with it. And in comparing Wordsworth's nature with that of other poets whose career has been less placid, we may say that he was perhaps not less excitable than they, but that it was his constant endeavour to avoid all excitement save that of the purely poetical kind; and that the outward circumstances of his life—his mediocrity of fortune, happy and early marriage, and absence of striking personal charm—made it easy for him to adhere to a method of life which was, in the truest sense of the term, *stoic*—stoic alike in its practical abstinences and in its calm and grave ideal. Purely poetic excitement, however, is hard to maintain at a high point; and the description quoted above of the voice which came through the stormy night should be followed by another—by the same candid and self-picturing hand—which represents the same habits in a quieter light.

"Nine-tenths of my verses," says the poet, in 1843, "have been murmured out in the open air. One day a stranger, having walked round the garden and grounds of Rydal Mount, asked of one of the female servants, who happened to be at the door, permission to see her master's study. 'This,' said she, leading him forward, 'is my master's library, where he keeps his books, but his study is out-of-doors.' After a long absence from home, it has more than once happened that some one of my cottage neighbours (not of the double-coach-house cottages) has said, 'Well, there he is! we are glad to hear him *booing* about again.'"

Wordsworth's health, steady and robust for the most part, indicated the same restrained excitability. While he was well able to resist fatigue, exposure to weather, &c., there were, in fact there things which his peculiar constitution made it difficult for him to do, and unfortunately those three things were reading, writing, and the composition of poetry. A frequently recurring inflammation of the eyes, caught originally from exposure to a cold wind when overheated by exercise, but always much aggravated by mental excitement, sometimes prevented his reading for months together. His symptoms when he attempted to hold the pen are thus described in a published letter to Sir George Beaumont (1803):

"I do not know from what cause it is, but during the last three years I have never had a pen in my hand for five minutes before my whole frame becomes a bundle of uneasiness; a perspiration starts out all over me, and my chest is oppressed in a manner which I cannot describe." While as to the labour of composition his sister says (September, 1800): "He writes with so much feeling and agitation that it brings on a sense of pain and internal weakness about his left side and stomach, which now often makes it im-

possible for him to write when he is, in mind and feelings, in such a state that he could do it without difficulty."

But turning to the brighter side of things—to the joys rather than the pains of the sensitive body and spirit—we find in Wordsworth's later years much of happiness on which to dwell. The memories which his name recalls are for the most part of thoughtful kindnesses, of simple-hearted joy in feeling himself at last appreciated, of tender sympathy with the young. Sometimes it is a recollection of some London drawing-room, where youth and beauty surrounded the rugged old man with an eager admiration which fell on no unwilling heart. Sometimes it is a story of some assemblage of young and old, rich and poor, from all the neighbouring houses and cottages, at Rydal Mount, to keep the aged poet's birthday with a simple feast and rustic play. Sometimes it is a report of some fireside gathering at Lancrigg or Foxhow, where the old man grew eloquent as he talked of Burns and Coleridge, of Homer and Virgil, of the true aim of poetry and the true happiness of man. Or we are told of some last excursion to well-loved scenes; of holly-trees planted by the poet's hands to stimulate nature's decoration on the craggy hill.

Such are the memories of those who best remember him. To those who were young children while his last years went by he seemed a kind of mystical embodiment of the lakes and mountains round him—a presence without which they would not be what they were. And now he is gone, and their untouched and early charm is going too.

"Heu, tua nobis
Pæne simul tecum solatia rapta, Menalca!

Rydal Mount, of which he had at one time feared to be deprived, was his to the end. He still paced the terrace-walks—but now the flat terrace oftener than the sloping one—whence the eye travels to lake and mountain across a tossing gulf of green. The doves that so long had been wont to answer with murmurs of their own to his "half-formed melodies" still hung in the trees above his pathway; and many who saw him there must have thought of the lines in which his favourite poet congratulates himself that he has not been exiled from his home.

"Calm as thy sacred streams thy years shall flow;
Groves which thy youth has known thine age shall know;
Here, as of old, Hyblæan bees shall twine
Their mazy murmur into dreams of thine—
Still from the hedge's willow-bloom shall come
Through summer silences a slumberous hum—
Still from the crag shall lingering winds prolong
The half-heard cadence of the woodman's song—
While evermore the doves, thy love and care,
Fill the tall elms with sighing in the air."

Yet words like these fail to give the solemnity of his last years

—the sense of grave retrospection, of humble self-judgment, of hopeful looking to the end. "It is indeed a deep satisfaction," he writes, near the close of life, "to hope and believe that my poetry will be, while it lasts, a help to the cause of virtue and truth, especially among the young. As for myself, it seems now of little moment how long I may be remembered. When a man pushes off in his little boat into the great seas of Infinity and Eternity, it surely signifies little how long he is kept in sight by watchers from the shore."

And again, to an intimate friend, "Worldly-minded I am not: on the contrary, my wish to benefit those within my humble sphere strengthens seemingly in exact proportion to my inability to realise those wishes. What I lament most is that the spirituality of my nature does not expand and rise the nearer I approach the grave, as yours does, and as it fares with my beloved partner."

The aged poet might feel the loss of some vividness of emotion, but his thoughts dwelt more and more constantly on the unseen world. One of the images which recurs oftenest to his friends is that of the old man as he would stand against the window of the dining-room at Rydal Mount and read the Psalms and Lessons for the day; of the tall bowed figure and the silvery hair; of the deep voice which always faltered when among the prayers he came to the words which give thanks for those "who have departed this life in Thy faith and fear."

There is no need to prolong the narration. As healthy infancy is the same for all, so the old age of all good men brings philosopher and peasant once more together, to meet with the same thoughts the inevitable hour. Whatever the well-fought fight may have been, rest is the same for all.

> "Retirement then might hourly look
> Upon a soothing scene;
> Age steal to his allotted nook
> Contented and serene;
> With heart as calm as lakes that sleep,
> In frosty moonlight glistening,
> Or mountain torrents, where they creep
> Along a channel smooth and deep,
> To their own far-off murmurs listening."

What touch has given to these lines their impress of an unfathomable peace? For there speaks from them a tranquillity which seems to overcome our souls; which makes us feel in the midst of toil and passion that we are disquieting ourselves in vain; that we are travelling to a region where these things shall not be; that "so shall immoderate fear leave us, and inordinate love shall die."

Wordsworth's last days were absolutely tranquil. A cold caught on a Sunday afternoon walk brought on pleurisy. He lay for some weeks in a state of passive weakness; and at last Mrs. Wordsworth said to him, "William, you are going to Dora." "He made no reply at the time, and the words seemed to have passed un-

heeded; indeed, it was not certain that they had been even heard. More than twenty-four hours afterwards one of his nieces came into his room, and was drawing aside the curtain of his chamber, and then, as if awakening from a quiet sleep, he said, 'Is that Dora?"

On Tuesday, April 23, 1850, as his favourite cuckoo-clock struck the hour of noon, his spirit passed away. His body was buried, as he had wished, in Grasmere churchyard. Around him the dalesmen of Grasmere lie beneath the shade of sycamore and yew; and Rotha's murmur mourns the pausing of that "music sweeter than her own." And surely of him. if of any one, we may think as of a man who was so in accord with nature, so at one with the very soul of things, that there can be no mansion of the Universe which shall not be to him a home, no Governor who will not accept him among his servants, and satisfy him with love and peace.

SHELLEY

BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

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SHELLEY.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD.

It is worse than useless to deplore the irremediable; yet no man, probably, has failed to mourn the fate of mighty poets, whose dawning gave the promise of a glorious day, but who passed from earth while yet the light that shone in them was crescent. That the world should know Marlowe and Giorgione, Raphael and Mozart, only by the products of their early manhood, is indeed a cause for lamentation, when we remember what the long lives of a Bach and Titian, a Michelangelo and Goethe, held in reserve for their maturity and age. It is of no use to persuade ourselves, as some have done, that we possess the best work of men untimely slain. Had Sophocles been cut off in his prime, before the composition of *Œdipus;* had Handel never merged the fame of his forgotten operas in the immortal music of his oratorios; had Milton been known only by the poems of his youth, we might with equal plausibility have laid that flattering unction to our heart. And yet how shallow would have been our optimism, how fallacious our attempt at consolation. There is no denying the fact that when a young Marcellus is shown by fate for one brief moment, and withdrawn before his spring-time has brought forth the fruits of summer, we must bow in silence to the law of waste that rules inscrutably in nature.

Such reflections are forced upon us by the lives of three great English poets of this century. Byron died when he was thirty-six, Keats when he was twenty-five, and Shelley when he was on the point of completing his thirtieth year. Of the three, Keats enjoyed the briefest space for the development of his extraordinary powers. His achievement, perfect as it is in some poetic qualities, remains so immature and incomplete that no conjecture can be hazarded about his future. Byron lived longer, and produced more than his brother poets. Yet he was extinguished when his genius was still ascendant, when his "swift and fair creations" were issuing like worlds from an archangel's hands. In his case we have perhaps only to deplore the loss of masterpieces that might have equalled,

but could scarcely have surpassed, what we possess. Shelley's early death is more to be regretted. Unlike Keats and Byron, he died by a mere accident. His faculties were far more complex, and his aims were more ambitious than theirs. He therefore needed length of years for their co-ordination; and if a fuller life had been allotted him, we have the certainty that from the discords of his youth he would have wrought a clear and lucid harmony.

These sentences form a somewhat gloomy prelude to a biography. Yet the student of Shelley's life, the sincere admirer of his genius, is almost forced to strike a solemn key-note at the outset. We are not concerned with one whose "little world of man" for good or ill was perfected, but with one whose growth was interrupted just before the synthesis of which his powers were capable had been accomplished.

August 4, 1792, is one of the most memorable dates in the history of English literature. On this day Percy Bysshe Shelley was born at Field Place, near Horsham, in the county of Sussex. His father, named Timothy, was the eldest son of Bysshe Shelley, Esquire, of Goring Castle, in the same county. The Shelley family could boast of great antiquity and considerable wealth. Without reckoning earlier and semi-legendary honours, it may here be recorded that it is distinguished in the elder branch by one baronetcy dating from 1611, and by a second in the younger dating from 1806. In the latter year the poet's grandfather received this honour through the influence of his friend the Duke of Norfolk. Mr. Timothy Shelley was born in the year 1753, and in 1791 he married Elizabeth, daughter of Charles Pilfold, Esquire, a lady of great beauty, aad endowed with fair intellectual ability, though not of a literary temperament. The first child of this marriage was the poet, named Bysshe in compliment to his grandfather, the then living head of the family, and Percy because of some remote connexion with the ducal house of Northumberland. Four daughters, Elizabeth, Mary, Hellen, and Margaret, and one son, John, who died in the year 1866, were the subsequent issue of Mr. Timothy Shelley's marriage. In the year 1815, upon the death of his father, he succeeded to the baronetcy, which passed, after his own death, to his grandson, the present Sir Percy Florence Shelley, as the poet's only surviving son.

Before quitting, once and for all, the arid region of genealogy, it may be worth mentioning that Sir Bysshe Shelley by his second marriage with Miss Elizabeth Jane Sydney Perry, heiress of Penshurst, became the father of five children, the eldest son of whom assumed the name of Shelley-Sidney, received a baronetcy, and left a son, Philip Charles Sidney, who was created Lord De l'Isle and Dudley. Such details are not without a certain value, inasmuch as they prove that the poet, who won for his ancient and honourable house a fame far more illustrious than titles can confer, was sprung from a man of no small personal force and worldly greatness. Sir Bysshe Shelley owed his position in society, the

wealth he accumulated, and the honours he transmitted to two families, wholly and entirely to his own exertions. Though he bore a name already distinguished in the annals of the English landed gentry, he had to make his own fortune under conditions of some difficulty. He was born in North America, and began life, it is said, as a quack doctor. There is also a legend of his having made a first marriage with a person of obscure birth in America. Yet such was the charm of his address, the beauty of his person, the dignity of his bearing, and the vigour of his will, that he succeeded in winning the hands and fortunes of two English heiresses; and, having begun the world with nothing, he left it at the age of seventy-four, bequeathing 300,000*l.* in the English Funds, together with estates worth 20,000*l.* a year to his descendants.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was therefore born in the purple of the English squirearchy; but never assuredly did the old tale of the swan hatched with the hen's brood of ducklings receive a more emphatic illustration than in this case. Gifted with the untameable individuality of genius, and bent on piercing to the very truth beneath all shams and fictions woven by society and ancient usage, he was driven by the circumstances of his birth and his surroundings into an exaggerated warfare with the world's opinion. His too frequent tirades against—

> The Queen of Slaves,
> The hood-winked Angel of the blind and dead,
> Custom,—

owed much of their asperity to the early influences brought to bear upon him by relatives who prized their position in society, their wealth, and the observance of conventional decencies, above all other things.

Mr. Timothy Shelley was in no sense of the word a bad man; but he was everything which the poet's father ought not to have been. As member for the borough of Shoreham, he voted blindly with his party; and that party looked to nothing beyond the interests of the gentry and the pleasure of the Duke of Norfolk. His philosophy was limited to a superficial imitation of Lord Chesterfield, whose style he pretended to affect in his familiar correspondence, though his letters show that he lacked the rudiments alike of logic and of grammar. His religious opinions might be summed up in Clough's epigram:—

> At church on Sunday to attend
> Will serve to keep the world your friend.

His morality in like manner was purely conventional, as may be gathered from his telling his eldest son that he would never pardon a *mésalliance*, but would provide for as many illegitimate children as he choose to have. For the rest, he appears to have been a fairly good landlord, and a not unkind father, sociable and hospit-

able, somewhat vain and occasionally odd in manner, but qualified for passing muster with the country gentlemen around him. In the capacity to understand a nature which deviated from the ordinary type so remarkably as Shelley's, he was utterly deficient; and perhaps we ought to regard it as his misfortune that fate made him the father of a man who was among the greatest portents of originality and unconventionality that this century has seen. Toward an ordinary English youth, ready to sow his wild oats at college, and willing to settle at the proper age and take his place upon the bench of magistrates, Sir Timothy Shelley would have shown himself an indulgent father; and it must be conceded by the poet's biographer that if Percy Bysshe had but displayed tact and consideration on his side, many of the misfortunes which signalized his relations to his father would have been avoided.

Shelley passed his childhood at Field Place, and when he was about six years old began to be taught, together with his sisters, by Mr. Edwards, a clergyman who lived at Warnham. What is recorded of these early years we owe to the invaluable communications of his sister Hellen. The difference of age between her and her brother Bysshe obliges us to refer her recollections to a somewhat later period—probably to the holidays he spent away from Sion House and Eton. Still, since they introduce us to the domestic life of his then loved home, it may be proper to make quotations from them in this place. Miss Shelley tells us that her brother "would frequently come to the nursery, and was full of a peculiar kind of pranks. One piece of mischief, for which he was rebuked, was running a stick through the ceiling of a low passage to find some new chamber, which could be made effective for some flights of his vivid imagination." He was very much attached to his sisters, and used to entertain them with stories, in which "an alchemist, old and grey, with a long beard," who was supposed to abide mysteriously in the garret of Field Place, played a prominent part. "Another favourite theme was the 'Great Tortoise,' that lived in Warnham Pond; and any unwonted noise was accounted for by the presence of this great beast, which was made into the fanciful proportions most adapted to excite awe and wonder." To his friend Hogg, in after years, Shelley often spoke about another reptile, no mere creature of myth or fable, the "Old Snake" who had inhabited the gardens of Field Place for several generations. This venerable serpent was accidentally killed by the gardener's scythe; but he lived long in the poet's memory, and it may reasonably be conjectured that Shelley's peculiar sympathy for snakes was due to the dim recollection of his childhood's favourite. Some of the games he invented to please his sisters were grotesque, and some both perilous and terrifying. "We dressed ourselves in strange costumes to personate spirits or fiends, and Bysshe would take a fire-stove and fill it with some inflammable liquid, and carry it flaming into the kitchen and to the back door." Shelley often took his sisters for long country rambles over hedge and fence, carrying them when the difficulties of the ground or their fatigue

required it. At this time "his figure was slight and beautiful,—his hands were models, and his feet are treading the earth again in one of his race; his eyes too have descended in their wild fixed beauty to the same person. As a child, I have heard that his skin was like snow, and bright ringlets covered his head." Here is a little picture which brings the boy vividly before our eyes: "Bysshe ordered clothes according to his own fancy at Eton, and the beautifully fitting silk pantaloons, as he stood as almost all men and boys do, with their coat-tails near the fire, excited my silent though excessive admiration."

When he was ten years of age, Shelley went to school at Sion House, Brentford, an academy kept by Dr. Greenlaw, and frequented by the sons of London tradesmen, who proved but uncongenial companions to his gentle spirit. It is fortunate for posterity that one of his biographers, his second cousin Captain Medwin, was his schoolfellow at Sion House; for to his recollections we owe some details of great value. Medwin tells us that Shelley learned the classic languages almost by intuition, while he seemed to be spending his time in dreaming, now watching the clouds as they sailed across the school-room window, and now scribbling sketches of fir-trees and cedars in memory of Field Place. At this time he was subject to sleep-walking, and, if we may credit this biographer, he often lost himself in reveries not far removed from trance. His favourite amusement was novel-reading; and to the many "blue books" from the Minerva press devoured by him in his boyhood, we may ascribe the style and tone of his first compositions. For physical sports he showed no inclination. "He passed among his school-fellows as a strange and unsocial being; for when a holiday relieved us from our tasks, and the other boys were engaged in such sports as the narrow limits of our prison-court allowed, Shelley, who entered into none of them, would pace backwards and forwards—I think I see him now—along the southern wall, indulging in various vague and undefined ideas, the chaotic elements, if I may say so, of what afterwards produced so beautiful a world."

Two of Shelley's most important biographical compositions undoubtedly refer to this period of his boyhood. The first is the passage in the Prelude to *Laon and Cythna* which describes his suffering among the unsympathetic inmates of a school—

> Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend, when first
> The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.
> I do remember well the hour which burst
> My spirit's sleep; a fresh May-dawn it was,
> When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
> And wept, I knew not why; until there rose
> From the near school-room, voices, that, alas!
> Were but one echo from a world of woes—
> The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.
>
> And then I clasped my hands and looked around—
> —But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,

Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground—
So without shame I spake :—"I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize
Without reproach or check." I then controlled
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn, but from that secret store
Wrought linked armour for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind.
Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more
Within me, till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

The second is a fragment on friendship preserved by Hogg. After defining that kind of passionate attachment which often precedes love in fervent natures, he proceeds: "I remember forming an attachment of this kind at school. I cannot recall to my memory the precise epoch at which this took place; but I imagine it must have been at the age of eleven or twelve. The object of these sentiments was a boy about my own age, of a character eminently generous, brave, and gentle; and the elements of human feeling seemed to have been, from his birth, genially compounded within him. There was a delicacy and a simplicity in his manners, inexpressibly attractive. It has never been my fortune to meet with him since my school-boy days; but either I confound my present recollections with the delusions of past feelings, or he is now a source of honour and utility to everyone around him. The tones of his voice were so soft and winning, that every word pierced into my heart; and their pathos was so deep, that in listening to him the tears have involuntarily gushed from my eyes. Such was the being for whom I first experienced the sacred sentiments of friendship." How profound was the impression made on his imagination and his feelings by this early friendship, may again be gathered from a passage in his note upon the antique group of Bacchus and Ampelus at Florence. "Look, the figures are walking with a sauntering and idle pace, and talking to each other as they walk, as you may have seen a younger and an elder boy at school, walking in some grassy spot of the playground with that tender friendship for each other which the age inspires."

These extracts prove beyond all question that the first contact with the outer world called into activity two of Shelley's strongest moral qualities—his hatred of tyranny and brutal force in any form, and his profound sentiment of friendship. The admiring love of women, which marked him no less strongly, and which made him second only to Shakespeare in the sympathetic delineation of a noble feminine ideal, had been already developed by his deep affec-

tion for his mother and sisters. It is said that he could not receive a letter from them without manifest joy.

"Shelley," says Medwin, "was at this time tall for his age, slightly and delicately built, and rather narrow-chested, with a complexion fair and ruddy, a face rather long than oval. His features, not regularly handsome, were set off by a profusion of silky brown hair, that curled naturally. The expression of his countenance was one of exceeding sweetness and innocence. His blue eyes were very large and prominent. They were at times, when he was abstracted, as he often was in contemplation, dull, and as it were, insensible to external objects; at others they flashed with the fire of intelligence. His voice was soft and low, but broken in its tones,—when anything much interested him, harsh and immodulated; and this peculiarity he never lost. He was naturally calm, but when he heard of or read of some flagrant act of injustice, oppression, or cruelty, then indeed the sharpest marks of horror and indignation were visible in his countenance."

Such as the child was, we shall find the man to have remained unaltered through the short space of life allowed him. Loving, innocent, sensitive, secluded from the vulgar concerns of his companions, strongly moralised after a peculiar and inborn type of excellence, drawing his inspirations from Nature and from his own soul in solitude, Shelley passed across the stage of this world, attended by a splendid vision which sustained him at a perilous height above the kindly race of men. The penalty of this isolation he suffered in many painful episodes. The reward he reaped in a measure of more authentic prophecy, and in a nobler realization of his best self, than could be claimed by any of his immediate contemporaries.

CHAPTER II.

ETON AND OXFORD.

In 1805 Shelley went from Sion House to Eton. At this time Dr. Keate was headmaster, and Shelley's tutor was a Mr. Bethel, "one of the dullest men in the establishment." At Eton Shelley was not popular either with his teachers or his elder school-fellows, although the boys of his own age are said to have adored him. "He was all passion," writes Mrs. Shelley; "passionate in his resistance to an injury, passionate in his love:" and this vehemence of temperament he displayed by organizing a rebellion against fagging, which no doubt won for him the applause of his juniors and equals. It was not to be expected that a lad intolerant of rule and disregardful of restriction, who neglected punctuality in the performance of his exercises, while he spent his leisure in translating half of Pliny's history, should win the approbation of pedagogues. At the same time the inspired opponent of the fagging system, the scorner of games and muscular amusements, could not hope to find much favour with such martinets of juvenile convention as a public school is wont to breed. At Eton, as elsewhere, Shelley's uncompromising spirit brought him into inconvenient contact with a world of vulgar usage, while his lively fancy invested the commonplaces of reality with dark hues borrowed from his own imagination. Mrs. Shelley says of him, "Tamed by affection, but unconquered by blows, what chance was there that Shelley should be happy at a public school?" This sentence probably contains the pith of what he afterwards remembered of his own school life, and there is no doubt that a nature like his, at once loving and high-spirited, had much to suffer. It was a mistake, however, to suppose that at Eton there were any serious blows to bear, or to assume that laws of love which might have led a spirit so gentle as Shelley's, were adapted to the common stuff of which the English boy is formed. The latter mistake Shelley made continually throughout his youth: and only the advance of years tempered his passionate enthusiasm into a sober zeal for the improvement of mankind by rational methods. We may also trace at this early epoch of his life that untamed intellectual ambition—that neglect of the immediate and detailed for the transcendental and universal—which was a marked characteristic of his genius, leading him to fly at the highest while he overleaped the facts of ordinary human life. "From his earliest years," says Mrs. Shelley, "all his amuse-

ments and occupations were of a daring, and in one sense of the term, lawless nature. He delighted to exert his powers, not as a boy, but as a man; and so with manly powers and childish wit, he dared and achieved attempts that none of his comrades could even have conceived. His understanding and the early development of imagination never permitted him to mingle in childish plays; and his natural aversion to tyranny prevented him from paying due attention to his school duties. But he was always actively employed; and although his endeavours were prosecuted with puerile precipitancy, yet his aim and thoughts were constantly directed to those great objects which have employed the thoughts of the greatest among men; and though his studies were not followed up according to school discipline, they were not the less dilligently applied to." This high-soaring ambition was the source both of his weakness and his strength in art, as well as in his commerce with the world of men. The boy who despised discipline and sought to extort her secrets from nature by magic, was destined to become the philanthropist who dreamed of revolutionising society by eloquence, and the poet who invented in *Prometheus Unbound* forms of grandeur too colossal to be animated with dramatic life.

A strong interest in experimental science had been already excited in him at Sion House by the exhibition of an orrery; and this interest grew into a passion at Eton. Experiments in chemistry and electricity, of the simpler and more striking kind, gave him intense pleasure—the more so perhaps because they were forbidden. On one occasion he set the trunk of an old tree on fire with a burning-glass; on another, while he was amusing himself with a blue flame, his tutor came into the room and received a severe shock from a highly-charged Leyden jar. During the holidays Shelley carried on the same pursuits at Field Place. "His own hands and clothes," says Miss Shelley, "were constantly stained and corroded with acids, and it only seemed too probable that some day the house would be burned down, or some serious mischief happen to himself or others from the explosion of combustibles." This taste for science Shelley long retained. If we may trust Mr. Hogg's memory, the first conversation which that friend had with him at Oxford consisted almost wholly of an impassioned monologue from Shelley on the revolution to be wrought by science in all realms of thought. His imagination was fascinated by the boundless vistas opened to the student of chemistry. When he first discovered that the four elements were not final, it gave him the acutest pleasure: and this is highly characteristic of the genius which was always seeking to transcend and reach the life of life withdrawn from ordinary gaze. On the other hand he seems to have delighted in the toys of science, playing with a solar microscope, and mixing strangest compounds in his crucibles, without taking the trouble to study any of its branches systematically. In his later years he abandoned these pursuits. But a charming reminiscence of them occurs in that most delightful of his familiar poems, the *Letter to Maria Gisborne.*

While translating Pliny and dabbling in chemistry, Shelley was not wholly neglectful of Etonian studies. He acquired a fluent, if not a correct, knowledge of both Greek and Latin, and astonished his contemporaries by the facility with which he produced verses in the latter language. His powers of memory were extraordinary, and the rapidity with which he read a book, taking in seven or eight lines at a glance, and seizing the sense upon the hint of leading words, was no less astonishing. Impatient speed and indifference to minutiæ were indeed among the cardinal qualities of his intellect. To them we may trace not only the swiftness of his imaginative flight, but also his frequent satisfaction with the somewhat less than perfect in artistic execution.

That Shelley was not wholly friendless or unhappy at Eton may be gathered from numerous small circumstances. Hogg says that his Oxford rooms were full of handsome leaving books, and that he was frequently visited by old Etonian aequaintances. We are also told that he spent the 40*l.* gained by his first novel, *Zastrozzi*, on a farewell supper to eight school-boy friends. A few lines, too, might be quoted from his own poem, the *Boat on the Serchio*, to prove that he did not entertain a merely disagreeable memory of his school life.* Yet the general experience of Eton must have been painful; and it is sad to read of this gentle and pure spirit being goaded by his coarser comrades, into fury, or coaxed to curse his father and the king for their amusement. It may be worth mentioning that he was called "the Atheist" at Eton; and though Hogg explains this by saying that "the Atheist" was an official character among the boys, selected from time to time for his defiance of authority, yet it is not improbable that Shelley's avowed opinions may even then have won for him a title which he proudly claimed in after-life. To allude to his boyish incantations and nocturnal commerce with fiends and phantoms would scarcely be needful, were it not that they seem to have deeply tinged his imagination. While describing the growth of his own genius in the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, he makes the following references to circumstances which might otherwise be trivial:—

> While yet a boy, I sought for ghosts, and sped
> Thro' many a listening chamber, cave, and ruin,
> And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
> Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
> I call'd on poisonous names with which our youth is fed,
> I was not heard, I saw then not—
> When, musing deeply on the lot
> Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
> All vital things that wake to bloming
> News of birds and blossoming,—
> Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
> I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy.

Among the Eton tutors was one whose name will always be revered by Shelley's worshippers; for he alone discerned the rare

* Forman's edition, vol. iv. p. 115.

gifts of the strange and solitary boy, and Shelley loved him. Dr. Lind was an old man, a physician, and a student of chemistry. Shelley spent long hours at his house, conversing with him, and receiving such instruction in philosophy and science as the grey-haired scholar could impart. The affection which united them must have been of no common strength or quality; for when Shelley lay ill of a fever at Field Place, and had conceived the probably ill-founded notion that his father intended to place him in a madhouse, he managed to convey a message to his friend at Eton, on the receipt of which Dr. Lind travelled to Horsham, and by his sympathy and skill restored the sick boy's confidence. It may incidentally be pointed out that this story, credited as true by Lady Shelley in her Memorials, shows how early an estrangement had begun between the poet and his father. We look, moreover, vainly for that mother's influence which might have been so beneficial to the boy in whom "love and life were twins, born at one birth." From Dr. Lind Shelley not only received encouragement to pursue his chemical studies; but he also acquired the habit of corresponding with persons unknown to him, whose opinions he might be anxious to discover or dispute. This habit, as we shall see in the sequel, determined Shelley's fate on two important occasions of his life. In return for the help extended to him at Eton, Shelley conferred undying fame on Dr. Lind; the characters of Zonaras in *Prince Athanase*, and of the hermit in *Laon and Cythna*, are portraits painted by the poet of his boyhood's friend.

The months which elapsed between Eton and Oxford were an important period in Shelley's life. At this time a boyish liking for his cousin, Harriet Grove, ripened into real attachment; and though there was perhaps no formal engagement between them, the parents on both sides looked with approval on their love. What it concerns us to know about this early passion, is given in a letter from a brother of Miss Grove. "Bysshe was at that time (just after leaving Eton) more attached to my sister Harriet than I can express, and I recollect well the moonlight walks we four had at Strode and also at St. Irving's; that, I think, was the name of the place, then the Duke of Norfolk's, at Horsham." For some time after the date mentioned in this letter, Shelley and Miss Grove kept up an active correspondence; but the views he expressed on speculative subjects soon began to alarm her. She consulted her mother and her father, and the engagement was broken off. The final separation does not seem to have taken place until the date of Shelley's expulsion from Oxford; and not the least cruel of the pangs he had to suffer at that period, was the loss of one to whom he had given his whole heart unreservedly. The memory of Miss Grove long continued to haunt his imagination, nor is there much doubt that his first unhappy marriage was contracted while the wound remained unhealed. The name of Harriet Westbrook and something in her face reminded him of Harriet Grove; it is even still uncertain to which Harriet the dedication of Queen Mab is addressed.*

* See Medwin, vol. i. p. 68.

In his childhood Shelley scribbled verses with fluency by no means unusual in the case of forward boys; and we have seen that at Sion House he greedily devoured the sentimental novels of the day. His favourite poets at the time of which I am now writing, were Monk Lewis and Southey; his favourite books in prose were romances by Mrs. Radcliffe and Godwin. He now began to yearn for fame and publicity. Miss Shelley speaks of a play written by her brother and her sister Elizabeth, which was sent to Matthews the comedian, and courteously returned as unfit for acting. She also mentions a little volume of her own verses, which the boy had printed with the tell-tale name of "H—ll—n Sh—ll—y" on the title-page. Medwin gives a long account of a poem on the story of the Wandering Jew, composed by him in concert with Shelley during the winter of 1809—1810. They sent the manuscript to Thomas Campbell, who returned it with the observation that it contained but two good lines:—

> It seem'd as if an angel's sigh
> Had breathed the plaintive symphony.

Undeterred by this adverse criticism, Shelley subsequently offered *The Wandering Jew* to two publishers, Messrs. Ballantyne and Co. of Edinburgh, and Mr. Stockdale of Pall Mall; but it remained in MS. at Edinburgh till 1831, when a portion was printed in *Fraser's Magazine*.

Just before leaving Eton he finished his novel of *Zastrozzi*, which some critics trace to its source in *Zofloya the Moor*, perused by him at Sion House. The most astonishing fact about this incoherent medley of mad sentiment is that it served to furnish forth the 40*l*. Eton supper already spoken of, that it was duly ushered into the world of letters by Messrs. Wilkie and Robinson on the 5th of June, 1810, and that it was seriously reviewed. The dates of Shelley's publications now come fast and frequent. In the late summer of 1810 he introduced himself to Mr. J. J. Stockdale, the then fashionable publisher of poems and romances, at his house of business in Pall Mall. With characteristic impetuosity the young author implored assistance in a difficulty. He had commissioned a printer in Horsham to strike off the astounding number of 1480 copies of a volume of poems; and he had no money to pay the printer's bill. Would Stockdale help him out of this dilemma, by taking up the quires and duly ushering the book into the world? Throughout his life Shelley exercised a wonderful fascination over the people with whom he came in contact, and almost always won his way with them as much by personal charm as by determined and impassioned will. Accordingly on this occasion Stockdale proved accommodating. The Horsham printer was somehow satisfied; and on the 17th of September, 1810, the little book came out with the title of *Original Poetry, by Victor and Cazire*. This volume has disappeared; and much fruitless conjecture has been expended upon the question of Shelley's collaborator in his juve-

nile attempt. Cazire stands for some one ; probably it is meant to represent a woman's name, and that woman may have been either Elizabeth Shelley or Harriet Grove. The *Original Poetry* had only been launched a week, when Stockdale discovered on a closer inspection of the book that it contained some verses well known to the world as the production of M. G. Lewis. He immediately communicated with Shelley, and the whole edition was suppressed—not, however, before about one hundred copies had passed into circulation. To which of the collaborators this daring act of petty larceny was due, we know not, but we may be sure that Shelley satisfied Stockdale on the point of piracy, since the publisher saw no reason to break with him. On the 14th of November in the same year he issued Shelley's second novel from his press, and entered into negotiations with him for the publication of more poetry. The new romance was named *St. Irvyne, or the Rosicrucian.* This tale, no less unreadable than *Zastrozzi*, and even more chaotic in its plan, contained a good deal of poetry, which has been incorporated in the most recent editions of Shelley's works. A certain interest attaches to it as the first known link between Shelley and William Godwin, for it was composed under the influence of the latter's novel, *St. Leon.* The title, moreover, carries us back to those moonlight walks with Harriet Grove alluded to above. Shelley's earliest attempts in literature have but little value for the student of poetry, except in so far as they illustrate the psychology of genius and its wayward growth. Their intrinsic merit is almost less than nothing, and no one could predict from their perusal the course which the future poet of *The Cenci* and *Epipsychidion* was to take. It might indeed be argued that the defects of his great qualities, the over-ideality, the haste, the incoherence, and the want of grasp on narrative, are glaringly apparent in these early works. But while this is true, the qualities themselves are absent. A cautious critic will only find food in *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyne* for wondering how such flowers and fruits of genius could have lain concealed within a germ apparently so barren. There is even less of the real Shelley discernible in these productions, than of the real Byron in the *Hours of Idleness.*

In the Michaelmas Term of 1810 Shelley was matriculated as a Commoner of University College, Oxford ; and very soon after his arrival he made the acquaintance of a man who was destined to play a prominent part in his subsequent history, and to bequeath to posterity the most brilliant, if not in all respects the most trustworthy, record of his marvellous youth. Thomas Jefferson Hogg was unlike Shelley in temperament and tastes. His feet were always planted on the earth, while Shelley flew aloft to heaven with singing robes around him, or the mantle of the prophet on his shoulders.* Hogg had much of the cynic in his nature; he was a

* He told Trelawny that he had been attracted to Shelley simply by his "rare talents as a scholar;" and Trelawny has recorded his opinion that Hogg's portrait of their friend was faithful, in spite of a total want of sympathy with his poetic genius. This testimony is extremely valuable.

shrewd man of the world, and a caustic humourist. Positive and practical, he chose the beaten path of life, rose to eminence as a lawyer, and cherished the Church and State opinions of a staunch Tory. Yet, though he differed so essentially from the divine poet, he understood the greatness of Shelley at a glance, and preserved for us a record of his friend's early days, which is incomparable for the vividness of its portraiture. The pages which narrate Shelley's course of life at Oxford have all the charm of a romance. No novel indeed is half so delightful as that picture, at once affectionate and satirical, tender and humorous, extravagant and delicately shaded, of the student life enjoyed together for a few short months by the inseparable friends. To make extracts from a masterpiece of such consummate workmanship is almost painful. Future biographers of Shelley, writing on a scale adequate to the greatness of their subject, will be content to lay their pens down for a season at this point, and let Hogg tell the tale in his own wayward but inimitable fashion. I must confine myself to a few quotations and a barren abstract, referring my readers to the ever-memorable pages 48—286 of Hogg's first volume, for the life that cannot be transferred to these.

"At the commencement of Michaelmas term," says this biographer, "that is, at the end of October, in the year 1810, I happened one day to sit next to a freshman at dinner; it was his first appearance in hall. His figure was slight, and his aspect remarkably youthful, even at our table, where all were very young. He seemed thoughtful and absent. He ate little, and had no acquaintance with any one." The two young men began a conversation, which turned upon the respective merits of German and Italian poetry, a subject they neither of them knew anything about. After dinner it was continued in Hogg's rooms, where Shelley soon led the talk to his favourite topic of science. "As I felt, in truth, but a slight interest in the subject of his conversation, I had leisure to examine, and I may add, to admire, the appearance of my very extraordinary guest. It was a sum of many contradictions. His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his bones and joints were large and strong. He was tall, but he stooped so much, that he seemed of a low stature. His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode of the day; but they were tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. His gestures were abrupt, and sometimes violent, occasionally even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was delicate and almost feminine, of the purest red and white; yet he was tanned and freckled by exposure to the sun, having passed the autumn, as he said, in shooting. His features, his whole face, and particularly his head, were, in fact, unusually small; yet the last *appeared* of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy, and in fits of absence, and in the agonies (if I may use the word) of anxious thought, he often rubbed it fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers quickly through his locks unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. In times when it was the mode to imitate stage-coachmen as closely as possible in

costume, and when the hair was invariably cropped, like that of our soldiers, this eccentricity was very striking. His features were not symmetrical (the mouth, perhaps, excepted), yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful. They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral expression less beautiful than the intellectual; for there was a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, and especially (though this will surprise many) that air of profound religious veneration, that characterises the best works, and chiefly the frescoes (and into these they infused their whole souls), of the great masters of Florence and of Rome. I recognised the very peculiar expression in these wonderful productions long afterwards, and with a satisfaction mingled with much sorrow, for it was after the decease of him in whose countenance I had first observed it."

In another place Hogg gives some details which complete the impression of Shelley's personal appearance, and which are fully corroborated by Trelawny's recollections of a later date. "There were many striking contrasts in the character and behaviour of Shelley, and one of the most remarkable was a mixture, or alternation, of awkwardness with agility—of the clumsy with the graceful. He would stumble in stepping across the floor of a drawing-room; he would trip himself up on a smooth-shaven grass-plot, and he would tumble in the most inconceivable manner in ascending the commodious, facile, and well-carpeted staircase of an elegant mansion, so as to bruise his nose or his lip on the upper steps, or to tread upon his hands, and even occasionally to disturb the composure of a well-bred footman; on the contrary, he would often glide without collision through a crowded assembly, thread with unerring dexterity a most intricate path, or securely and rapidly tread the most arduous and uncertain ways."

This word-portrait corresponds in its main details to the descriptions furnished by other biographers, who had the privilege of Shelley's friendship. His eyes were blue, unfathomably dark and lustrous. His hair was brown; but very early in life it became grey, while his unwrinkled face retained to the last a look of wonderful youth. It is admitted on all sides that no adequate picture was ever painted of him. Mulready is reported to have said that he was too beautiful to paint. And yet, although so singularly lovely, he owed less of his charm to regularity of feature or to grace of movement, than to an indescribable personal fascination. One further detail Hogg pointedly insists upon. Shelley's voice "was excruciating; it was intolerably shrill, harsh, and discordant." This is strongly stated; but, though the terms are certainly exaggerated, I believe that we must trust this first impression made on Shelley's friend. There is a considerable mass of convergent testimony to the fact that Shelley's voice was high pitched, and that when he became excited, he raised it to a scream. The epithets "shrill," "piercing," "penetrating," frequently recur in the descriptions given of it. At the same time its quality seems to

have been less dissonant than thrilling; there is abundance of evidence to prove that he could modulate it exquisitely in the reading of poetry, and its tone proved no obstacle to the persuasive charms of his eloquence in conversation. Like all finely tempered natures, he vibrated in harmony with the subjects of his thought. Excitement made his utterance shrill and sharp. Deep feeling or the sense of beauty lowered its tone to richness; but the *timbre* was always acute, in sympathy with his intense temperament. All was of one piece in Shelley's nature. This peculiar voice, varying from moment to moment, and affecting different sensibilities in divers ways, corresponds to the high-strung passion of his life, his fine-drawn and ethereal fancies, and the clear vibrations of his palpitating verse. Such a voice, far-reaching, penetrating, and unearthly, befitted one who lived in rarest ether on the topmost heights of human thought.

The acquaintance begun that October evening soon ripened into close friendship. Shelley and Hogg from this time forward spent a large part of those days and nights together in common studies, walks, and conversations. It was their habit to pass the morning, each in his own rooms, absorbed in private reading. At one o'clock they met and lunched, and then started for long rambles in the country. Shelley frequently carried pistols with him upon these occasions, and would stop to fix his father's franks upon convenient trees and shoot at them. The practice of pistol-shooting, adopted so early in his life, was afterwards one of his favourite amusements in the company of Byron. Hogg says that in his use of fire-arms he was extraordinarily careless. "How often have I lamented that Nature, which so rarely bestows upon the world a creature endowed with such marvellous talents, ungraciously rendered the gift less precious by implanting a fatal taste for perilous recreations, and a thoughtlessness in the pursuit of them, that often caused his existence from one day to another to seem in itself miraculous." On their return from these excursions the two friends, neither of whom cared for dining in the College Hall, drank tea and supped together, Shelley's rooms being generally chosen as the scene of their symposia.

These rooms are described as a perfect palace of confusion—chaos on chaos heaped of chemical apparatus, books, electrical machines, unfinished manuscripts, and furniture worn into holes by acids. It was perilous to use the poet's drinking-vessels, less, perchance a seven-shilling piece half dissolved in *aqua regia* should lurk at the bottom of the bowl. Handsome razors were used to cut the lids of wooden boxes, and valuable books served to support lamps or crucibles; for in his vehement precipitation Shelley always laid violent hands on what he found convenient to the purpose of the moment. Here the friends talked and read until late in the night. Their chief studies at this time were in Locke and Hume and the French essayists. Shelley's bias toward metaphysical speculation was beginning to assert itself. He read the School Logic with avidity, and practised himself without intermis-

sion in dialectical discussion. Hogg observes, what is confirmed by other testimony, that in reasoning Shelley never lost sight of the essential bearings of the topic in dispute, never condescended to personal or captious arguments, and was Socratically bent on following the dialogue wherever it might lead, without regard for consequences. Plato was another of their favourite authors; but Hogg expressly tells us that they only approached the divine philosopher through the medium of translations. It was not until a later period that Shelley studied his dialogues in the original: but the substance of them, seen through Mdme. Dacier's version, acted powerfully on the poet's sympathetic intellect. In fact, although at this time he had adopted the conclusions of materialism, he was at heart all through his life an idealist. Therefore the mixture of the poet and the sage in Plato fascinated him. The doctrine of *anamnesis*, which offers so strange a vista to speculative reverie, by its suggestion of an earlier existence in which our knowledge was acquired, took a strong hold upon his imagination; he would stop in the streets to gaze wistfully at babies, wondering whether their newly imprisoned souls were not replete with the wisdom stored up in a previous life.

In the acquisition of knowledge he was then as ever unrelaxing. "No student ever read more assiduously. He was to be found, book in hand, at all hours; reading in season and out of season; at table, in bed, and especially during a walk; not only in the quiet country, and in retired paths; not only at Oxford, in the public walks, and High Street, but in the most crowded thoroughfares of London. Nor was he less absorbed by the volume that was open before him, in Cheapside, in Cranbourne Alley, or in Bond Street, than in a lonely lane, or a secluded library. Sometimes a vulgar fellow would attempt to insult or annoy the eccentric student in passing. Shelley always avoided the malignant interruption by stepping aside with his vast and quiet agility." And again:—"I never beheld eyes that devoured the pages more voraciously than his; I am convinced that two-thirds of the period of day and night were often employed in reading. It is no exaggeration to affirm, that out of the twenty-four hours, he frequently read sixteen. At Oxford, his diligence in this respect was exemplary, but it greatly increased afterwards, and I sometimes thought that he carried it to a pernicious excess: I am sure, at least, that I was unable to keep pace with him." With Shelley study was a passion, and the acquisition of knowledge was the entrance into a thrice-hallowed sanctuary. "The irreverent many cannot comprehend the awe—the careless apathetic worldling cannot imagine the enthusiasm—nor can the tongue that attempts only to speak of things visible to the bodily eye, express the mighty emotion that inwardly agitated him, when he approached, for the first time, a volume which he believed to be replete with the recondite and mystic philosophy of antiquity: his cheeks glowed, his eyes became bright, his whole frame trembled, and his entire attention was immediately swallowed up in the depths of contemplation. The

rapid and vigorous conversion of his soul to intellect can only be compared with the instantaneous ignition and combustion, which dazzle the sight, when a bundle of dry reeds, or other light inflammable substance, is thrown upon a fire already rich with accumulated heat."

As at Eton, so at Oxford, Shelley refused to keep the beaten track of prescribed studies, or to run in ordinary grooves of thought. The mere fact that Aristotle was a duty, seems to have disgusted him with the author of the Organon, from whom, had his works been prohibited to undergraduates, he would probably have been eager to learn much. For mathematics and jurisprudence he evinced a marked distaste. The common business of the English Parliament had no attraction for him, and he read few newspapers. While his mind was keenly interested in great political questions, he could not endure the trivial treatment of them in the daily press, and cared far more for principles than for the incidents of party warfare. Here again he showed that impatience of detail, and that audacity of self-reliant genius, which were the source of both his weakness and his strength. He used to speak with aversion of a Parliamentary career, and told Hogg that though this had been suggested to him, as befitting his position, by the Duke of Norfolk, he could never bring himself to mix with the rabble of the House. It is none the less true, however, that he entertained some vague notion of eventually succeeding to his father's seat.

Combined with his eager intellectual activity, there was something intermittent and fitful in the working of his mental faculties. Hogg, in particular, mentions one of his habits in a famous passage, which, since it brings the two friends vividly before us, may here be quoted. "I was enabled to continue my studies afterwards in the evening, in consequence of a very remarkable peculiarity. My young and energetic friend was then overcome by extreme drowsiness, which speedily and completely vanquished him; he would sleep from two to four hours, often so soundly that his slumbers resembled a deep lethargy; he lay occasionally upon the sofa, but more commonly stretched upon the rug before a large fire, like a cat; and his little round head was exposed to such a fierce heat, that I used to wonder how he was able to bear it. Sometimes I have interposed some shelter, but rarely with any permanent effect; for the sleeper usually contrived to turn himself, and to roll again into the spot where the fire glowed the brightest. His torpor was generally profound, but he would sometimes discourse incoherently for a long while in his sleep. At six he would suddenly compose himself, even in the midst of a most animated narrative, or of earnest discussion; and he would lie buried in entire forgetfulness, in a sweet and mighty oblivion, until ten, when he would suddenly start up, and, rubbing his eyes with great violence, and passing his fingers swiftly through his long hair, would enter at once into a vehement argument, or begin to recite verses, either of his own composition or from the works of others, with rapidity and an energy that were often quite painful."

Shelley's moral qualities are described with no less enthusiasm than his intellectual and physical beauty by the friend from whom I have already drawn so largely. Love was the root and basis of his nature: this love, first developed as domestic affection, next as friendship, then as a youth's passion, now began to shine with steady lustre as an all-embracing devotion to his fellow-men. There is something inevitably chilling in the words "benevolence" and "philanthropy." A disillusioned world is inclined to look with languid approbation on the former, and to disbelieve in the latter. Therefore I will not use them to describe that intense and glowing passion of unselfishness, which throughout his life led Shelley to find his strongest interests in the joys and sorrows of his fellow-creatures, which inflamed his imagination with visions of humanity made perfect, and which filled his days with sweet deeds of unnumbered charities. I will rather collect from the pages of his friend's biography a few passages recording the first impression of his character, the memory of which may be carried by the reader through the following brief record of his singular career:—

"His speculations were as wild as the experience of twenty-one years has shown them to be; but the zealous earnestness for the augmentation of knowledge, and the glowing philanthropy and boundless benevolence that marked them, and beamed forth in the whole deportment of that extraordinary boy, are not less astonishing than they would have been if the whole of his glorious anticipations had been prophetic; for these high qualities, at least, I have never found a parallel."

"In no individual perhaps was the moral sense ever more completely developed than in Shelley: in no being was the perception of right or of wrong more acute."

"As his love of intellectual pursuits was vehement, and the vigour of his genius almost celestial, so were the purity and sanctity of his life most conspicuous."

"I never knew any one so prone to admire as he was, in whom the principle of veneration was so strong."

"I have had the happiness to associate with some of the best specimens of gentlemen; but with all due deference for those admirable persons (may my candour and my preference be pardoned), I can affirm that Shelley was almost the only example I have yet found that was never wanting, even in the most minute particular, of the infinite and various observances of pure, entire, and perfect gentility."

"Shelley was actually offended, and indeed more indignant than would appear to be consistent with the singular mildness of his nature, at a coarse and awkward jest, especially if it were immodest, or uncleanly; in the latter case his anger was unbounded, and his uneasiness pre-eminent: he was, however, sometimes vehemently delighted by exquisite and delicate sallies, particularly with a fanciful, and perhaps somewhat fantastical facetiousness—possibly the more because he was himself utterly incapable of pleasantry."

"I never could discern in him any more than two fixed principles. The first was a strong irrepressible love of liberty; of liberty in the abstract, and somewhat after the pattern of the ancient republics, without reference to the English constitution, respecting which he knew little and cared nothing, heeding it not at all. The second was an equally ardent love of toleration of all opinions, but more especially of religious opinions; of toleration, complete, entire, universal, unlimited; and, as a deduction and corollary from which latter principle, he felt an intense abhorrence of persecution of every kind, public or private."

The testimony in the foregoing extracts as to Shelley's purity and elevation of moral character is all the stronger, because it is given by a man not over-inclined to praise, and of a temperament as unlike the poet's as possible. If we were to look only upon this side of his portrait, we should indeed be almost forced to use the language of his most enthusiastic worshippers, and call him an archangel. But it must be admitted that, though so pure and gentle and exalted, Shelley's virtues were marred by his eccentricity, by something at times approaching madness, which paralysed his efficiency by placing him in a glaringly false relation to some of the best men in the world around him. He possessed certain good qualities in excess; for, though it sounds paradoxical, it is none the less true that a man may be too tolerant, too fond of liberty: and it was precisely the extravagance of these virtues in Shelley which drove him into acts and utterances so antagonistic to society as to be intolerable.

Of Shelley's poetical studies we hear but little at this epoch. His genius by a stretch of fancy might be compared to one of those double stars which dart blue and red rays of light: for it was governed by two luminaries, poetry and metaphysics; and at this time the latter seems to have been in the ascendant. It is, however, interesting to learn that he read and re-read Landor's *Gebir*—stronger meat than either Southey's epics or the ghost-lyrics of Monk Lewis. Hogg found him one day busily engaged in correcting proofs of some original poems. Shelley asked his friend what he thought of them, and Hogg answered that it might be possible by a little alteration to turn them into capital burlesques. This idea took the young poet's fancy; and the friends between them soon effected a metamorphosis in Shelley's serious verses, by which they became unmistakably ridiculous. Having achieved their purpose, they now bethought them of the proper means of publication. Upon whom should the poems, a medley of tyrannicide and revolutionary raving, be fathered? Peg Nicholson, a mad washerwoman, had recently attempted George the Third's life with a carving-knife. No more fitting author could be found. They would give their pamphlet to the world as her work, edited by an admiring nephew. The printer appreciated the joke no less than the authors of it. He provided splendid paper and magnificent type; and before long the book of nonsense was in the hands of Oxford readers. It sold for the high price of half-a-crown a copy; and, what is hardly

credible, the gownsmen received it as a genuine production. "It was indeed a kind of fashion to be seen reading it in public, as a mark of nice discernment, of a delicate and fastidious taste in poetry, and the best criterion of a choice spirit." Such was the genesis of *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson*, edited by John Fitz Victor. The name of the supposititious nephew reminds us of *Original Poems* by Victor and Cazire, and raises the question whether the poems in that lost volume may not have partly furnished forth this Oxford travesty.

Shelley's next publication, or quasi-publication, was neither so innocent in substance nor so pleasant in its consequences. After leaving Eton, he continued the habit, learned from Dr. Lind, of corresponding with distinguished persons whem he did not personally know. Thus we find him about this time addressing Miss Felicia Browne (afterwards Mrs. Hemans) and Leigh Hunt. He plied his correspondents with all kinds of questions; and as the dialectical interest was uppermost at Oxford, he now endeavoured to engage them in discussions on philosophical and religious topics. We have seen that his favourite authors were Locke, Hume, and the French materialists. With the impulsiveness peculiar to his nature, he adopted the negative conclusions of a shallow nominalistic philosophy. It was a fundamental point with him to regard all questions, however sifted and settled by the wise of former ages, as still open; and in his inordinate thirst for liberty, he rejoiced to be the Deicide of a pernicious theological delusion. In other words, he passed at Oxford by one leap from a state of indifferentism with regard to Christianity, into an attitude of vehement antagonism. With a view to securing answers to his missives, he printed a short abstract of Hume's and other arguments against the existence of a Deity, presented in a series of propositions, and signed with a mathematically important "Q. E D." This document he forwarded to his proposed antagonists, expressing his inability to answer its arguments, and politely requesting them to help him. When it so happened that any incautious correspondents acceded to this appeal, Shelley fell with merciless severity upon their feeble and commonplace reasoning. The little pamphlet of two pages was entitled *The Necessity of Atheism;* and its proposed publication, beyond the limits of private circulation already described, is proved by an advertisement (Feb. 9, 1811) in the *Oxford University and City Herald.* It was not, however, actually offered for sale.

A copy of this syllabus reached a Fellow of another college, who made the Master of University acquainted with the fact. On the morning of March 25, 1811, Shelley was sent for to the Senior Common Room, and asked whether he acknowleged himself to be the author of the obnoxious pamphlet. On his refusal to answer this question, he was served with a formal sentence of expulsion duly drawn up and sealed. The college authorities have been blamed for unfair dealing in this matter. It is urged that they ought to have proceeded by the legal method of calling witnesses;

and that the sentence was not only out of all proportion to the offence, but that it ought not to have been executed till persuasion had been tried. With regard to the former indictment, I do not think that a young man still *in statu pupillari*, who refused to purge himself of what he must have known to be a serious charge, had any reason to expect from his tutors the formalities of an English court of law. There is no doubt that the Fellows were satisfied of his being the real author; else they could not have ventured on so summary a measure as expulsion. Their question was probably intended to give the culprit an occasion for apology, of which they foresaw he would not avail himself. With regard to the second, it is true that Shelley was amenable to kindness, and that gentle and wise treatment from men whom he respected, might possibly have brought him to retract his syllabus. But it must be remembered that he despised the Oxford dons with all his heart; and they were probably aware of this. He was a dexterous, impassioned reasoner, whom they little cared to encounter in argument on such a topic. During his short period of residence, moreover, he had not shown himself so tractable as to secure the good wishes of superiors, who prefer conformity to incommensurable genius. It is likely that they were not averse to getting rid of him as a man dangerous to the peace of their society; and now they had a good occasion. Nor was it to be expected that the champion and apostle of Atheism—and Shelley was certainly both, in spite of Hogg's attempts to tone down the purpose of his document—should be unmolested in his propaganda by the aspirants to fat livings and ecclesiastical dignities. Real blame, however, attaches to these men: first, for their dulness to discern Shelley's amiable qualities; and secondly, for the prejudgment of the case implied in the immediate delivery of their sentence. Both Hogg and Shelley accused them, besides, of a gross brutality, which was, to say the least, unseemly on so serious an occasion. At the beginning of this century the learning and the manners of the Oxford dons were at a low ebb; and the Fellows of University College acted harshly but not altogether unjustly, ignorantly but after their own kind, in this matter of Shelley's expulsion. *Non ragionam di lor, ma guarda e passa.* Hogg, who stood by his friend manfully at this crisis, and dared the authorities to deal with him as they had dealt with Shelley, adding that they had just as much real proof to act upon in his case, and intimating his intention of returning the same answer as to the authorship of the pamphlet, was likewise expelled. The two friends left Oxford together by the coach on the morning of the 26th of March.

Shelley felt his expulsion acutely. At Oxford he had enjoyed the opportunities of private reading which the University afforded in those days of sleepy studies and innocuous examinations. He delighted in the security of his "oak," and above all things he found pleasure in the society of his one chosen friend. He was now obliged to exchange these good things for the tumult and discomfort of London. His father, after clumsily attempting com-

promises, had forbidden his return to Field Place. The whole fabric of his former life was broken up. The last hope of renewing his engagement with his cousin had to be abandoned. His pecuniary position was precarious, and in a short time he was destined to lose the one friend who had so generously shared his fate. Yet the notion of recovering his position as a student in one of our great Universities, of softening his father's indignation, or of ameliorating his present circumstances by the least concession, never seems to have occurred to him. He had suffered in the cause of truth and liberty, and he willingly accepted his martyrdom for conscience' sake.

CHAPTER III.

LIFE IN LONDON AND FIRST MARRIAGE.

It is of some importance at this point to trace the growth and analyse the substance of Shelley's atheistical opinions. The cardinal characteristic of his nature was an implacable antagonism to shams and conventions, which passed too easily into impatient rejection of established forms as worse than useless. Born in the stronghold of squirearchical prejudices, nursed amid the trivial platitudes that then passed in England for philosophy, his keen spirit flew to the opposite pole of thought with a recoil that carried him at first to inconsiderate negation. His passionate love of liberty, his loathing for intolerance, his impatience of control for self and others, and his vivid logical sincerity, combined to make him the Quixotic champion of extreme opinions. He was too fearless to be wise, too precipitate to suspend his judgment, too convinced of the paramount importance of iconoclasm, to mature his views in silence. With the unbounded audacity of youth, he hoped to take the fortresses of "Anarch Custom" by storm at the first assault. His favourite ideal was the vision of a youth, Laon or Lionel, whose eloquence had power to break the bonds of despotism, as the sun thaws ice upon an April morning. It was enough, he thought, to hurl the glove of defiance boldly at the tyrant's face—to sow the *Necessity of Atheism* broadcast on the bench of Bishops, and to depict incest in his poetry, not because he wished to defend it, but because society must learn to face the most abhorent problems with impartiality. Gifted with a touch as unerring as Ithuriel's spear for the unmasking of hypocrisy, he strove to lay bare the very substance of the soul beneath the crust of dogma and the froth of traditional beliefs; nor does it seem to have occurred to him that, while he stripped the rags and patches that conceal the nakedness of ordinary human nature, he might drag away the weft and woof of nobler thought. In his poet-philosopher's imagination there bloomed a wealth of truth and love and beauty so abounding, that behind the mirage he destroyed, he saw no blank, but a new Eternal City of the Spirit. He never doubted whether his fellow-creatures were certain to be equally fortunate.

Shelley had no faculty for compromise, no perception of the blended truths and falsehoods through which the mind of man must gradually win its way from the obscurity of myths into the clearness of positive knowledge, for ever toiling and for ever foiled,

and forced to content itself with the increasing consciousness of limitations. Brimming over with love for men, he was deficient in sympathy with the conditions under which they actually think and feel. Could he but dethrone the Anarch Custom, the millennium, he argued, would immediately arrive; nor did he stop to think how different was the fibre of his own soul from that of the unnumbered multitudes around him. In his adoration of what he recognised as living, he retained no reverence for the ossified experience of past ages. The principle of evolution, which forms a paving link between the obsolete and the organically vital, had no place in his logic. The spirit of the French Revolution, uncomsromising, shattering, eager to build in a day the structure which long centuries of growth must fashion, was still fresh upon him. We who have survived the enthusiasms of that epoch, who are exhausted with its passions, and who have suffered from its reactive impulses, can scarcely comprehend the vivid faith and young-eyed joy of aspiration which sustained Shelley in his flight toward the region of impossible ideals. For he had a vital faith; and this faith made the ideals he conceived seem possible—faith in the duty and desirability of overthrowing idols; faith in the gospel of liberty, fraternity, equality; faith in the divine beauty of nature; faith in a love that rules the universe; faith in the perfectibity of man; faith in the omnipresent soul, whereof our souls are atoms; faith in affection as the ruling and co-ordinating substance of morality. The man who lived by this faith was in no vulgar sense of the word an Atheist. When he proclaimed himself to be one, he pronounced his hatred of a gloomy religion, which had been the instrument of kings and priests for the enslavement of their fellow-creatures. As he told his friend Trelawny, he used the word Atheism "to express his abhorrence of superstition; he took it up as a knight took up a gauntlet, in defiance of injustice." But Shelley believed too much to be consistently agnostic. He believed so firmly and intensely in his own religion—a kind of passionate positivism, a creed which seemed to have no God because it was all God—that he felt convinced he only needed to destroy accepted figments, for the light which blazed around him to break through and flood the world with beauty. Shelley can only be called an Atheist, in so far as he maintained the inadequacy of hitherto received conceptions of the Deity, and indignantly rejected that Moloch of cruelty who is worshipped in the debased forms of Christianity. He was an Agnostic only in so far as he proclaimed the impossibility of solving the insoluble, and knowing the unknowable. His clear and fearless utterances upon these points place him in the rank of intellectual heroes. But his own soul, compact of human faith and love, was far too religious and too sanguine to merit either epithet as vulgarly applied.

The negative side of Shelley's creed had the moral value which attaches to all earnest conviction, plain speech, defiance of convention, and enthusiasm for intellectual liberty at any cost. It was marred, however, by extravagance, crudity, and presumption.

Much that he would fain have destroyed because he found it customary, was solid, true and beneficial. Much that he thought it desirable to substitute, was visionary, hollow, and pernicious. He lacked the touchstone of mature philosophy, whereby to separate the pinchbeck from the gold of social usage; and in his intense enthusiasm he lost his hold on common sense, which might have saved him from the puerility of arrogant iconoclasm. The positive side of his creed remains precious, not because it was logical, or scientific, or coherent, but because it was an ideal, fervently felt, and penetrated with the whole life-force of an incomparable nature. Such ideals are needed for sustaining man upon his path amid the glooms and shadows of impenetrable ignorance They form the seal and pledge of his spiritual dignity, reminding him that he was not born to live like brutes, or like the brutes to perish without effort.

Fatti non foste a viver come bruti,
Ma per seguir virtude e conoscenza.

These criticisms apply to the speculations of Shelley's earlier life, when his crusade against accepted usage was extravagant, and his confidence in the efficacy of mere eloquence to change the world was overweening. The experience of years, however, taught him wisdom without damping his enthusiasm, refined the crudity of his first fervent speculations, and mellowed his philosephy. Had he lived to a ripe age, there is no saying with what clear and beneficent lustre might have shone that light of aspiration which during his turpid youth burned somewhat luridly, and veiled its radiance in the smoke of mere rebelliousness and contradiction.

Hogg and Shelley settled in lodgings at No. 15, Poland Street, soon after their arrival in London. The name attracted Shelley: "it reminded him of Thaddeus of Warsaw and of freedom." He was further fascinated by a gaudy wall-paper of vine-trellises and grapes, which adorned the parlour; and vowed that he would stay there for ever. "For ever," was a word often upon Shelley's lips in the course of his checquered life; and yet few men have been subject to so many sudden changes through the buffetings of fortune from without and the inconstancy of their own purpose, than he was. His biographer has no little trouble to trace and note with accuracy his perpetual flittings and the names of his innumerable temporary residences. A month had not elapsed before Hogg left him in order to begin his own law studies at York; and Shelley abode "alone in the vine-trellised chamber, where he was to remain, a bright-eyed, restless fox amidst sour grapes, not, as his poetic imagination at first suggested, for ever, but a little while longer."

The records of this first residence in London are meagre, but not unimportant. We hear of negotiations and interviews with Mr. Timothy Shelley, all of which proved unavailing. Shelley would not recede from the position he had taken up. Nothing would induce him to break off his intimacy with Hogg, or to place himself under the tutor selected for him by his father. For Paley's,

or as Mr. Shelley called him "Palley's," Evidences he expressed unbounded contempt. The breach between them gradually widened. Mr. Shelley at last determined to try the effect of cutting off supplies; but his son only hardened his heart, and sustained himself by a proud consciousness of martyrdom. I agree with Shelley's last and best biographer, Mr. W. M. Rossetti, in his condemnation of the poet's behavior as a son. Shelley did not treat his father with the common consideration due from youth to age; and the only instances of unpardonable bad taste to be found in his correspondence or the notes of his conversation, are insulting phrases applied to a man who was really more unfortunate than criminal in his relations to this changeling from the realms of faery. It is not too much to say that his dislike of his father amounted to derangement; and certainly some of his suspicions with regard to him were the hallucinations of a heated fancy. How so just and gentle a nature was brought into so false a moral situation, whether by some sudden break-down of confidence in childhood or by a gradually increasing mistrust, is an interesting but perhaps insoluble problem. We only know that in his early boyhood Shelley loved his father so much as to have shown unusual emotion during his illness on one occasion, but that, while at Eton, he had already become possessed by a dark suspicion concerning him. This is proved by the episode of Dr. Lind's visit during his fever. Then and ever afterwards he expected monstrous treatment at his hands, although the elder gentleman was nothing worse than a muddle-headed squire. It has more than once occurred to me that this fever may have been a turning point in his history, and that a delusion, engendered by delirium, may have fixed itself upon his mind, owing to some imperfection in the process of recovery. But the theory is too speculative and unsupported by proof to be more than passingly alluded to.

At this time Shelley found it difficult to pay his lodgings and buy food. It is said that his sisters saved their pocket-money to support him: and we know that he paid them frequent visits at their school on Clapham Common. It was here that his characteristic hatred of tyranny displayed itself on two occasions. "One day," writes Miss Hellen Shelley, "his ire was greatly excited at a black mark hung round one of our throats, as a penalty for some small misdemeanour. He expressed great disapprobation, more of the system than that one of his sisters should be so punished. Another time he found me, I thi k, in an iron collar, which certainly was a dreadful instrument of torture in my opinion. It was not worn as a punishment, but because I *poked;* but Bysshe declared it would make me grow crooked, and ought to be discontinued immediately." The acquaintance which he now made with one of his sister's school friends was destined to lead to most important results.* Harriet Westbrook was a girl of sixteen years, remarkably good-looking, with a brilliant pink and white

* It is probable that he saw her for the first time in January, 1811.

complexion, beautiful brown hair, a pleasant voice, and a cheerful temper. She was the daughter of a man who kept a coffee-house in Mount Street, nick-named "Jew" Westbrook, because of his appearance. She had an elder sister, called Eliza, dark of complexion, and gaunt of figure, with the abundant hair that plays so prominent a part in Hogg's relentless portrait. Eliza, being nearly twice as old as Harriet, stood in the relation of a mother to her. Both of these young ladies, and the "Jew" their father, welcomed Shelley with distinguished kindness. Though he was penniless for the nonce, exiled from his home, and under the ban of his family's displeasure, he was still the heir to a large landed fortune and a baronetcy. It was not to be expected that the coffee-house people should look upon him with disfavour.

Shelley paid Harriet frequent visits both at Mrs. Fenning's school and at Mount Street, and soon began a correspondence with her, hoping, as he expressly stated in a letter of a later date, by converting her to his theories, to add his sister and her "to the list of the good, the disinterested, the free." At first she seems to have been horrified at the opinions he expressed; but in this case at least he did not overrate the powers of eloquence. With all the earnestness of an evangelist, he preached his gospel of free thought or atheism, and had the satisfaction of forming his young pupil to his views. He does not seem to have felt any serious inclination for Harriet; but in the absence of other friends, he gladly availed himself of her society. Gradually she became more interesting to him, when he heard mysterious accounts of suffering at home and tyranny at school. This was enough to rouse in Shelley the spirit of Quixotic championship, if not to sow the seeds of love. What Harriet's ill-treatment really was, no one has been able to discover; yet she used to affirm that her life at this time was so irksome that she contemplated suicide.

During the summer of 1811, Shelley's movements were more than usually erratic, and his mind was in a state of extraordinary restlessness. In the month of May, a kind of accommodation was come to with his father. He received permission to revisit Field Place, and had an allowance made him of 200*l.* a year. His uncle, Captain Pilfold of Cuckfield, was instrumental in effecting this partial reconciliation. Shelley spent some time at his uncle's country house, oscillating between London, Cuckfield, and Field Place, with characteristic rapidity, and paying one flying visit to his cousin Grove at Cwm Elan, near Rhayader, in North Wales. This visit is worth mention, since he now for the first time saw the scenery of waterfalls and mountains. He was, however, too much preoccupied to take much interest in nature. He was divided between his old affection for Miss Grove, his new but somewhat languid interest in Harriet, and a dearly cherished scheme for bringing about a marriage between his sister Elizabeth and his friend Hogg. The letters written to Hogg at this period (vol. i. pp. 387—418), are exceedingly important and interesting, revealing as they do the perturbation of his feelings and the almost morbid

excitement of his mind. But they are unluckily so badly edited, whether designedly or by accident, that it would be dangerous to draw minute conclusions from them. As they stand, they raise injurious suspicions, which can only be set at rest by a proper assignment of dates and explanations.

Meanwhile his destiny was shaping itself with a rapidity that plunged him suddenly into decisive and irrevocable action. It is of the greatest moment to ascertain precisely what his feelings were during this summer with regard to Harriet. Hogg has printed two letters in immediate juxtaposition: the first without date, the second with the post-mark of Rhayader. Shelley ends the first epistle thus: "Your jokes on Harriet Westbrook amuse me: it is a common error for people to fancy others in their own situation, but if I know anything about love, I am *not* in love. I have heard from the Westbrooks, both of whom I highly esteem." He begins the second with these words: "You will perhaps see me before you can answer this; perhaps not; heaven knows! I shall certainly come to York, but *Harriet Westbrook* will decide whether now or in three weeks. Her father has persecuted her in a most horrible way, by endeavoring to compel her to go to school. She asked my advice: resistance was the answer, at the same time that I essayed to mollify Mr. W. in vain! And in consequence of my advice *she* has thrown herself upon *my* protection. I set off for London on Monday. How flattering a distinction!—I am thinking of ten million things at once. What have I said? I declare, quite *ludicrous*. I advised her to resist. She wrote to say that resistance was useless, but that she would fly with me, and threw herself upon my protection. We shall have 200*l.* a year; when we find it run short, we must live, I suppose, upon love! Gratitude and admiration, all demand that I should love her *for ever*. We shall see you at York. I will hear your arguments for matrimonialism, by which I am now almost convinced. I can get lodgings at York, I suppose. Direct to me at Graham's, 18, Sackville Street, Piccadilly." From a letter recently published by Mr. W. M. Rossetti (the University Magazine, Feb., 1878), we further learn that Harriet, having fallen violently in love with her preceptor, had avowed her passion and flung herself into his arms.

It is clear from these documents, first, that Shelley was not deeply in love with Harriet when he eloped with her; secondly, that he was not prepared for the step: thirdly, that she induced him to take it; and fourthly, that he took it under a strong impression of her having been ill-treated. She had appealed to his most powerful passion, the hatred of tyranny. She had excited his admiration by setting conventions at defiance, and showing her readiness to be his mistress. Her confidence called forth his gratitude. Her choice of him for a protector flattered him: and, moreover, she had acted on his advice to carry resistance *à outrance*. There were many good Shelleyan reasons why he should elope with Harriet; but among them all I do not find that spontaneous and unsophisticated feeling, which is the substance of enduring love.

In the same series of letters, so incoherently jumbled together by Hogg's carelessness or caprice, Shelley more than once expresses the utmost horror of matrimony. Yet we now find him upon the verge of contracting marriage with a woman whom he did not passionately love, and who had offered herself unreservedly to him. It is worth pausing to observe that even Shelley, fearless and uncompromising as he was in conduct, could not at this crisis practise the principles he so eloquently impressed on others. Yet the point of weakness was honourable. It lay in his respect for women in general, and in his tender chivalry for the one woman who had cast herself upon his generosity.*

"My unfortunate friend Harriet," he writes under date Aug. 15, 1811, from London, whither he had hurried to arrange the affairs of his elopement, "is yet undecided; not with respect to me, but to herself. How much, my dear friend, have I to tell you. In my leisure moments for thought, which since I wrote have been few, I have considered the important point on which you reprobated my hasty decision. The ties of love and honour are doubtless of sufficient strength to bind congenial souls—they are doubtless indissoluble, but by the brutish force of power; they are delicate and satisfactory. Yet the arguments of impracticability, and what is even worse, the disproportionate sacrifice which the female is called upon to make—these arguments, which you have urged in a manner immediately irresistible, I cannot withstand. Not that I suppose it to be likely that *I* shall directly be called upon to evince my attachment to either theory. I am become a perfect convert to matrimony, not from temporising, but from *your* arguments; nor, much as I wish to emulate your virtues and liken myself to you, do I regret the prejudices of anti-matrimonialism from your example or assertion. No. The *one* argument, which you have urged so often with so much energy; the sacrifice made by the woman, so disproportioned to any which the man can give—this alone may exculpate me, were it a fault, from uninquiring submission to your superior intellect."

Whether Shelley from his own peculiar point of view was morally justified in twice marrying, is a question of casuistry which has often haunted me. The reasons he alleged in extenuation of his conduct with regard to Harriet, prove the goodness of his heart, his openness to argument, and the delicacy of his unselfishness. Bnt they do not square with his expressed code of conduct; nor is it easy to understand how, having found it needful to submit to custom, for his partner's sake, he should have gone on denouncing an institution which he recognized in his own practice. The conclusion seems to be that, though he despised accepted usage, and would fain have fashioned the world afresh to suit his heart's desire, the instincts of a loyal gentleman and his practical good sense were stronger than his theories.

A letter from Shelley's cousin, Mr. C. H. Grove, gives the de-

* See Shelley's third letter to Godwin (Hogg ii. p. 63) for another defence of his conduct. "We agreed," &c.

tails of Harriet's elopement. "When Bysshe finally came to town to elope with Miss Westbrook, he came as usual to Linclon's Inn Fields, and I was his companion on his visits to her, and finally accompanied them early one morning—I forget now the month, or the date, but it might have been September—in a hackney coach to the Green Dragon, in Gracechurch Street, where we remained all day, till the hour when the mail-coaches start, when they departed in the northern mail for York." From York the young couple made their way at once to Edinburgh, where they were married according to the formalities of the Scotch law.

Shelley had now committed that greatest of social crimes in his father's eyes—a *mésalliance*. Supplies and communications were at once cut off from the prodigal; and it appears that Harriet and he were mainly dependent upon the generosity of Captain Pilfold for subsistence. Even Jew Westbrook, much as he may have rejoiced at seeing his daughter wedded to the heir of several thousands a year, buttoned up his pockets, either because he thought it well to play the part of an injured parent, or because he was not certain about Shelley's expectations. He afterwards made the Shelleys an allowance of 200*l.* a year, and early in 1812 Shelley says that he is in receipt of twice that income. Whence we may conclude that both fathers before long relented to the extent of the sum above mentioned.

In spite of temporary impecuniosity, the young people lived happily enough in excellent lodgings in George Street. Hogg, who joined them early in September, has drawn a lively picture of their domesticity. Much of the day was spent in reading aloud; for Harriet, who had a fine voice and excellent lungs, was never happy unless she was allowed to read and comment on her favourite authors. Shelley sometimes fell asleep during the performance of these rites; but when he woke refreshed with slumber, he was no less ready than at Oxford to support philosophical paradoxes with impassioned and persuasive eloquence. He began to teach Harriet Latin, set her to work upon the translation of a French story by Madame Cottin, and for his own part executed a version of one of Buffon's treatises. The sitting-room was full of books. It was one of Shelley's peculiarities to buy books wherever he went, regardless of their volume or their cost. These he was wont to leave behind, when the moment arrived for a sudden departure from his temporary abode; so that, as Hogg remarks, a fine library might have been formed from the waifs and strays of his collections scattered over the three kingdoms. This quiet course of life was diversified by short rambles in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, and by many episodes related with Hogg's caustic humour. On the whole, the impression left upon the reader's mind is that Shelley and Harriet were very happy together at this period, and that Harriet was a charming and sweet-tempered girl, somewhat too much given to the study of trite ethics, and slightly deficient in sensibility, but otherwise a fit and soothing companion for the poet.

They were not, however, content to remain in Edinburgh. Hogg was obliged to leave that city, in order to resume his law studies at York, and Shelley's programme of life at this period imperatively required the society of his chosen comrade. It was therefore decided that the three friends should settle at York, to remain "for ever" in each other's company. They started in a post-chaise, the good Harriet reading aloud novels by the now forgotten Holcroft with untiring energy to charm the tedium of the journey. At York more than one cloud obscured their triune felicity. In the first place they were unfortunate in their choice of lodgings. In the second Shelley found himself obliged to take an expensive journey to London, in the fruitless attempt to come to some terms with his father's lawyer, Mr. Whitton. Mr. Timothy Shelley was anxious to bind his erratic son down to a settlement of the estates, which, on his own death, would pass into the poet's absolute control. He suggested numerous arrangements; and not long after the date of Shelley's residence in York, he proposed to make him an immediate allowance of 2000*l.*, if Shelley would but consent to entail the land on his heirs male. This offer was indignantly refused. Shelley recognised the truth that property is a trust far more than a possession, and would do nothing to tie up so much command over labour, such incalculable potentialities of social good or evil, for an unborn being of whose opinions he knew nothing. This is only one among many instances of his readiness to sacrifice ease comfort, nay, the bare necessities of life, for principle.

On his return to York, Shelley found a new inmate established in their lodgings. The incomparable Eliza, who was henceforth doomed to guide his destinies to an obscure catastrophe, had arrived from London. Harriet believed her sister to be a paragon of beauty, good sense, and propriety. She obeyed her elder sister like a mother; never questioned her wisdom; and foolishly allowed her to interpose between herself and her husband. Hogg had been told before her first appearance in the friendly circle that Eliza was "beautiful, exquisitely beautiful; an elegant figure, full of grace; her face was lovely,—dark, bright eyes; jet-black hair, glossy; a crop upon which she bestowed the care it merited,—almost all her time; and she was so sensible, so amiable, so good!" Now let us listen to the account he has himself transmitted of this woman, whom certainly he did not love, and to whom poor Shelley had afterwards but little reason to feel gratitude. "She was older than I had expected, and she looked much older than she was. The lovely face was seamed with the small-pox, and of a dead white, as faces so much marked and scarred commonly are; as white indeed as a mass of boiled rice, but of a dingy hue, like rice boiled in dirty water. The eyes were dark, but dull, and without meaning; the hair was black and glossy, but coarse; and there was the admired crop—a long crop, much like the tail of a horse—a switch tail. The fine figure was meagre, prim, and constrained. The beauty, the grace, and the elegance existed, no doubt, in their utmost perfection, but only in the imagination of her partial young

sister. Her father, as Harriet told me, was familiarly called 'Jew Westbrook,' and Eliza greatly resembled one of the dark-eyed daughters of Judah."

This portrait is drawn, no doubt, with an unfriendly hand; and, in Hogg's biography, each of its sarcastic touches is sustained with merciless reiteration, whenever the mention of Eliza's name is necessary. We hear, moreover, how she taught the blooming Harriet to fancy that she was the victim of her nerves, how she checked her favourite studies, and how she ruled the household by continual reference to a Mrs. Grundy of her earlier experience. "What would Miss Warne say?" was as often on her lips, if we may credit Hogg, as the brush and comb were in her hands.

This intrusion of Eliza disturbed the harmony of Shelley's circle; but it is possible that there were deeper reasons for the abrupt departure which he made from York with his wife and her sister in November, 1811. One of his biographers asserts with categorical precision that Shelley had good cause to resent Hogg's undue familiarity with Harriet, and refers to a curious composition, published by Hogg as a continuation of Goethe's *Werther*, but believed by Mr. Mc Carthy to have beet a letter from the poet to his friend, in confirmation of his opinion.* However this may be, the precipitation with which the Shelleys quitted York, scarcely giving Hogg notice of their resolution, is insufficiently accounted for in his biography.

The destination of the travellers was Keswick. Here they enaged lodgings for a time, and then moved into a furnished house. Probably Shelley was attracted to the lake country as much by the celebrated men who lived there, as by the beauty of its scenery, and the cheapness of its accommodation. He had long entertained an admiration for Southey's poetry, and was now beginning to study Wordsworth and Coleridge. But if he hoped for much companionship with the literary lions of the lakes, he was disappointed. Coleridge was absent, and missed making his acquaintance—a circumstance he afterwards regretted, saying that he could have been more useful to the young poet and metaphysician than Southey. DeQuincey, though he writes ambiguously upon this point, does not seem to have met Shelley. Wordsworth paid him no attention; and though he saw a good deal of Southey, this intimacy changed Shelley's early liking for the man and poet into absolute contempt. It was not likely that the cold methodical student, the mechanical versifier, and the political turncoat, who had outlived all his earlier illusions, should retain the good-will of such an Ariel as Shelley, in whose brain *Queen Mab* was already simmering. Life at Keswick began to be monotonous. It was, however, enlivened by a visit to the Duke of Norfolk's seat, Greystoke. Shelley spent his last guinea on the trip; but though the ladies of his family enjoyed the honour of some days passed in ducal hospitalities, the visit was not fruitful of results. The Duke at this time kindly did his

* McCarthy's Shelley's Early Life, p. 127.

best, but without success, to bring about a reconciliation between his old friend, the member for Horsham, and his rebellious son.

Another important incident of the Keswick residence was Shelley's letter to William Godwin, whose work on Political Justice he had studied with unbounded admiration. He never spoke of this book without respect in after-life, affirming that the perusal of it had turned his attention from romances to questions of public utility. The earliest letter dated to Godwin from Keswick, January 3, 1812, is in many respects remarkable, and not the least so as a specimen of self-delineation. He entreats Godwin to become his guide, philosopher, and friend, urging that "if desire for universal happiness has any claim upon your preference," if persecution and injustice suffered in the cause of philanthropy and truth may commend a young man to William Godwin's regard, he is not unworthy of this honour. We who have learned to know the flawless purity of Shelley's aspirations, can refrain from smiling at the big generalities of this epistle. Words which to men made callous by long contact with the world, ring false and wake suspicion, were for Shelley but the natural expression of his most abiding mood. Yet Godwin may be pardoned if he wished to know more in detail of the youth, who sought to cast himself upon his care in all the panoply of phrases about philanthropy and universal happiness. Shelley's second letter contains an extraordinary mixture of truth willingly communicated, and of curious romance, illustrating his tendency to colour facts with the hallucinations of an ardent fancy. Of his sincerity there is, I think, no doubt. He really meant what he wrote; and yet we have no reason to believe the statement that he was twice expelled from Eton for disseminating the doctrines of *Political Justice*, or that his father wished to drive him by poverty to accept a commission in some distant regiment, in order that he might prosecute the *Necessity of Atheism* in his absence, procure a sentence of outlawry, and so convey the family estates to his younger brother. The embroidery of bare fact with a tissue of imagination was a peculiarity of Shelley's mind; and this letter may be used as a key for the explanation of many strange occurrences in his biography. What he tells Godwin about his want of love for his father, and his inability to learn from the tutors imposed upon him at Eaton and Oxford, represents the simple truth. Only from teachers chosen by himself, and recognized as his superiors by his own deliberate judgment, can he receive instruction. To Godwin he resigns himself with the implicit confidence of admiration. Godwin was greatly struck with this letter. Indeed, he must have been "or God or beast," like the insensible man in Aristotle's *Ethics*, if he could have resisted the devotion of so splendid and high-spirited a nature, poured forth in language at once so vehement and so convincingly sincere. He accepted the responsible post of Shelley's Mentor; and thus began a connexion which proved not only a source of moral support and intellectual guidance to the poet, but it was also destined to end in a closer personal tie between the two illustrious men.

In his second letter Shelley told Godwin that he was then engaged in writing "An inquiry into the causes of the failure of the French Revolution to benefit mankind," adding, "My plan is that of resolving to lose no opportunity to disseminate truth and happiness." Godwin sensibly replied that Shelley was too young to set himself up as a teacher and apostle: but his pupil did not take the hint. A third letter (Jan. 16, 1812) contains this startling announcement: "In a few days we set off to Dublin. I do not know exactly where, but a letter addressed to Keswick will find me. Our journey has been settled some time. We go principally *to forward as much as we can* the Catholic Emanicipation." In a fourth letter (Jan. 28, 1812) he informs Godwin that he has already prepared an address to the Catholics of Ireland, and combats the dissuasions of his counsellor with ingenious arguments to prove that his contemplated expedition can do no harm, and may be fruitful of great good.

It appears that for some time past Shelley had devoted his attention to Irish politics. The persecution of Mr. Peter Finnerty, an Irish journalist and editor of *The Press* newspaper, who had been sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment in Lincoln jail (between Feb. 7, 1811, and Aug. 7, 1812) for plain speech about Lord Castlereagh, roused his hottest indignation. He published a poem, as yet unrecovered, for his benefit; the proceeds of the sale amounting, it is said, to nearly one hundred pounds.* The young enthusiast, who was attempting a philosophic study of the French Revolution, whose heart was glowing with universal philanthropy, and who burned to disseminate truth and happiness, judges that Ireland would be a fitting field for making a first experiment in practical politics. Armed with the MS. of his *Address to the Irish People*,† he set sail with Harriet and Eliza on the 3rd of February from Whitehaven. They touched the Isle of Man; and after a very stormy passage, which drove them to the north coast of Ireland, and forced them to conplete their journey by land, the party reached Dublin travel-worn, but with unabated spirit, on the 12th. Harriet shared her husband's philanthropical enthusiasm. "My wife," wrote Shelley to Godwin, "is the partner of my thoughts and feelings." Indeed, there is abundant proof in both his letters and hers, about this period, that they felt and worked together. Miss Westbrook, meantime, ruled the household; "Eliza keeps our common stock of money for safety in some nook or corner of her dress, but we are not dependent on her, although she gives it out as we want it." This master-touch of unconscious delineation tells us all we need to know about the domestic party now established in 7, Lower Sackville Street. Before a week had passed, the *Address to the Irish People* had been printed. Shelley and Harriet immediately engaged their whole energies in the task of distribution. It was advertised for sale; but that alone seemed insufficient. On the 27th of February Shelley wrote to a friend in England: "I

* McCarthy, p. 255.
† It was published in Dublin. See reprint in McCarthy, p. 179.

have already sent 400 of my Irish pamphlets into the world, and they have excited a sensation of wonder in Dublin. Eleven hundred yet remain for distribution. Copies have been sent to sixty public-houses. . . . Expectation is on the tiptoe. I send a man out every day to distribute copies, with instructions where and how to give them. His account corresponds with the multitudes of people who possess them. I stand at the balcony of our window and watch till I see a man *who looks likely*. I throw a book to him."

A postscript to this letter lets us see the propaganda from Harriet's point of view. "I am sure you would laugh were you to see us give the pamphlets. We throw them out of window, and give them to men that we pass in the streets. For myself, I am ready to die of laughter when it is done, and Percy looks so grave. Yesterday he put one into a woman's hood of a cloak."

The purpose of this address was to rouse the Irish people to a sense of their real misery, to point out that Catholic Emancipation and a Repeal of the Union Act were the only radical remedies for their wrongs, and to teach them the spirit in which they should attempt a revolution. On the last point Shelley felt intensely. The whole address aims at the inculcation of a noble moral temper, tolerant, peaceful, resolute, rational, and self-denying. Considered as a treatise on the principles which should govern patriots during a great national crisis, the document is admirable: and if the inhabitants of Dublin had been a population of Shelleys, its effects might have been permanent and overwhelming. The mistake lay in supposing that a people whom the poet himself described as "of scarcely greater elevation in the scale of intellectual being than the oyster," were qualified to take the remedy of their grievances into their own hands, or were amenable to such sound reasoning as he poured forth. He told Godwin that he had "wilfully vulgarised the language of this pamphlet, in order to reduce the remarks it contains to the taste and comprehension of the Irish peasantry." A few extracts will enable the reader to judge how far he had succeeded in this aim. I select such as seem to me most valuable for the light they throw upon his own opinions. "All religions are good which make men good; and the way that a person ought to prove that his method of worshipping God is best, is for himself to be better than all other men." "A Protestant is my brother, and a Catholic is my brother." "Do not inquire if a man be a heretic, if he be a Quaker, a Jew, or a heathen; but if he be a virtuous man, if he loves liberty and truth, if he wish the happiness and peace of human kind. If a man be ever so much a believer and love not these things, he is a heartless hypocrite, a rascal, and a knave." "It is not a merit to tolerate, but it is a crime to be intolerant." "Anything short of unlimited toleration and complete charity with all men, on which you will recollect that Jesus Christ principally insisted, is wrong." "Be calm, mild, deliberate, patient..... Think and talk and discuss. ....Be free and be happy, but first be wise and good." Proceeding to recommend the formation of associations, he condemns secret and violent societies; "Be fair, open, and you

will be terrible to your enemies." "Habits of SOBRIETY, REGULARITY, and THOUGHT must be entered into and firmly resolved upon." Then follow precepts, which Shelley no doubt regarded as practical, for the purification of private morals, and the regulation of public discussion by the masses whom he elsewhere recognised as "thousands huddled together, one mass of animated filth."

The foregoing extracts show that Shelley was in no sense an inflammatory demagogue; however visionary may have been the hopes he indulged, he based those hopes upon the still more Utopian foundation of a sudden ethicial reform, and preached a revolution without bloodshed. We find in them, moreover, the germs of *The Revolt of Islam*, where the hero plays the part successfully in fiction, which the poet had attempted without appreciable result in practice at Dublin. The same principles guided Shelley at a still later period. When he wrote his *Masque of Anarchy*, he bade the people of England to assemble by thousands, strong in the truth and justice of their cause, invincible in peaceful opposition to force.

While he was sowing his Address broadcast in the streets of Dublin, Shelley was engaged in printing a second pamphlet on the subject of Catholic Emancipation. It was entitled *Proposals for an Association*, and advocated in serious and temperate phrase the formation of a vast society, binding all the Catholic patriots of Ireland together, for the recovery of their rights. In estimating Shelley's political sagacity, it must be remembered that Catholic Emancipation has since his day been brought about by the very measure he proposed and under the conditions he foresaw. Speaking of the English Government in his Address, he used these simple phrases:—"It wants altering and mending. It will be mended, and a reform of English Government will produce good to the Irish." These sentences were prophetic; and perhaps they are destined to be even more so.

With a view to presenting at one glance Shelley's position as a practical politician, I shall anticipate the course of a few years, and compare his Irish pamphlets with an essay published in 1817, under the title of *A Proposal for putting Reform to the Vote throughout the Kingdom*. He saw that the House of Commons did not represent the country; and acting upon his principle that government is the servant of the governed, he sought means for ascertaining the real will of the nation with regard to its Parliament, and for bringing the collective opinion of the population to bear upon its rulers. The plan proposed was that a huge network of committees should be formed, and that by their means every individual man should be canvassed. We find here the same method of advancing reform by peaceable associations as in Ireland. How moderate were his own opinions with regard to the franchise, is proved by the following sentence;—"With respect to Universal Suffrage, I confess I consider its adoption, in the present unprepared state of public knowledge and feeling, a measure fraught with peril. I think that none but those who register their names as paying a certain

small sum in *direct taxes* ought at present to send members to Parliament." As in the case of Ireland, so in that of England, subsequent events have shown that Shelley's hopes were not exaggerated.

While the Shelleys were in Dublin, a meeting of the Irish Catholics was announced for the evening of Feb. 28. It was held in Fishamble Street Theatre; and here Shelley made his *debut* as an orator. He spoke for about an hour; and his speech was, on the whole, well received, though it raised some hisses at the beginning by his remarks upon Roman Catholicism. There is no proof that Shelley, though eloquent in conversation, was a powerful public speaker. The somewhat conflicting accounts we have received of this his maiden effort,tend to the impression that he failed to carry his audience with him. The dissemination of his pamphlets had, however, raised considerable interest in his favour; and he was welcomed by the press as an Englishman of birth and fortune, who wished well to the Irish cause. His youth told somewhat against him. It was difficult to take the strong words of the beardless boy at their real value; and as though to aggravate this drawback, his Irish servant, Daniel Hill, an efficient agent in the dissemination of the Address, affirmed that his master was fifteen—four years less than his real age.

In Dublin Shelley, made acquaintance with Curran, whose jokes and dirty stories he could not appreciate, and with a Mr. Lawless, who began a history of the Irish people in concert with the young philosopher. We also obtain.from one of Harriet's letters, a somewhat humorous peep at another of their friends, a patriotic Mrs. Nugent, who supported herself by working in a furrier's shop, and who is described as "sitting in the room now, and talking to Percy about Virtue." After less than two months' experience of his Irish propaganda, Shelley came to the conclusion that he "had done all that he could." The population of Dublin had not risen to the appeal of their Laon with the rapidity he hoped for; and accordingly upon the 7th of April he once more embarked with his family for Holyhead. In after-days he used to hint that the police had given him warning that it would be well for him to leave Dublin; but, though the danger of a prosecution was not wholly visionary, this intimation does not seem to have been made. Before he quitted Ireland, however. he despatched a box containing the remaining, copies of his *Address* and *Proposals*, together with the recently printed edition of another manifesto, called a *Declaration of Rights* to a friend in Sussex. This box was delayed at the Holyhead custom-house, and opened. Its contents gave serious anxiety to the Surveyor of Customs, who communicated the astonishing discovery through the proper official channels to the government. After some correspondence, the authorities decided to take no steps against Shelley. and the box was forwarded to its destination.

The friend in question was a Miss Eliza Hitchener, of Hurstpierpoint, who kept a sort of school, and who had attracted Shelley's favourable notice by her advanced political and religious opinions.

He does not seem to have made her personal acquaintance; but some of his most interesting letters from Ireland are addressed to her. How recklessly he entered into serious entanglements with people whom he had not learned to know, may be gathered from these extracts:—"We will meet you in Wales, and never part again. It will not do. In compliance with Harriet's earnest solicitations, I entreated you instantly to come and join our circle, resign your school, all, everything for us and the Irish cause." "I ought to count myself a favoured mortal with such a wife and such a friend." Harriet addressed this lady as "Portia;" and it is an undoubted fact that soon after their return to England, Miss Hitchener formed one of their permanent family circle. Her entrance into it and her exit from it at no very distant period are, however, both obscure. Before long she acquired another name than Portia in the Shelley household, and now she is better known to fame as the "Brown Demon." Eliza Westbrook took a strong dislike to her; Harriet followed suit; and Shelley himself found that he had liked her better at a distance than in close companionship. She had at last to be bought off or bribed to leave.

The scene now shifts with bewildering frequency; nor is it easy to trace the Shelleys in their rapid flight. About the 21st of April, they settled for a short time at Nantgwilt, near Rhayader, in North Wales. Ere long we find them at Lynmouth, on the Somersetshire coast. Here Shelley continued his political propaganda, by circulating the *Declaration of Rights*, whereof mention has already been made. It was, as Mr. W. M. Rossetti first pointed out, a manifesto concerning the ends of government and the rights of man —framed in imitation of two similar French Revolutionary documents, issued by the Constituent Assembly in August, 1789, and by Robespierre in April, 1793.* Shelley used to seal this pamphlet in bottles and set it afloat upon the sea, hoping perhaps that after this wise it would traverse St. George's Channel and reach the sacred soil of Erin. He also employed his servant, Daniel Hill, to distribute it among the Somersetshire farmers. On the 19th of August this man was arrested in the streets of Barnstaple, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment for uttering a seditious pamphlet; and the remaining copies of the *Declaration of Rights* were destroyed. In strong contrast with the puerility of these proceedings, is the grave and lofty *Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, composed at Lynmouth, and printed at Barnstable.* A printer, named D. J. Eaton, had recently been sentenced to imprisonment by his Lordship for publishing the Third Part of Paine's *Age of Reason*. Shelley's epistle is an eloquent argument in favour of toleration and the freedom of the intellect, carrying the matter beyond the instance of legal tyranny which occasioned its composition, and treating it with philosophic, if impassioned seriousness.

An extract from this composition will serve to show his power of handling weighty English prose, while yet a youth of hardly

* Reprinted in McCarthy, p. 324.
† Reprinted in Lady Shelley's Memorials, p. 29.

twenty. I have chosen a passage bearing on his theological opinions :—

Moral qualities are such as only a human being can possess. To attribute them to the Spirit of the Universe, or to suppose that it is capable of altering them, is to degrade God into man, and to annex to this incomprehensible Being qualities incompatible with any possible definition of his nature.

It may be here objected : Ought not the Creator to possess the perfections of the creature ? No. To attribute to God the moral qualities of man, is to suppose him susceptible of passions, which, arising out of corporeal organization, it is plain that a pure spirit cannot possess. . . . But even suppose, with the vulgar, that God is a venerable old man, seated on a throne of clouds, his breast the theatre of various passions, analogous to those of humanity, his will changeable and uncertain as that of an earthly king; still, goodness and justice are qualities seldom nominally denied him, and it will be admitted that he disapproves of any action incompatible with those qualities Persecution for opinion is unjust. With what consistency, then, can the worshippers of a Deity whose benevolence they boast, embitter the existence of their fellow-being, because his ideas of that deity are different from those which they entertain ? Alas ! there is no consistency in those persecutors who worship a benevolent Deity; those who worship a demon would alone act consonantly to these principles by imprisoning and torturing in his name.

Shelley had more than once urged Godwin and his family to visit him. The sage of Skinner Street thought that now was a convenient season. Accordingly he left London, and travelled by coach to Lynmouth, where he found that the Shelleys had flitted a few days previously without giving any notice. This fruitless journey of the poet's Mentor is humorously described by Hogg, as well as the one undertaken by himself in the following year to Dublin with a similar result. The Shelleys were now established at Tan-yr-allt, near Tremadoc, in North Wales, on an estate belonging to Mr. W. A. Madocks, M.P. for Boston. This gentleman had reclaimed a considerable extent of marshy ground from the sea, and protected it with an embankment. Shelley whose interest in the poor people around him was always keen and practical, lost no time in making their acquaintance at Tremadoc. The work of utility carried out by his landlord aroused his enthusiastic admiration ; and when the embankment was emperilled by a heavy sea, he got up a subscription for its preservation. Heading the list with 500*l.*, how raised, or whether paid, we know not, he endeavoured to extract similar sums from the neighbouring gentry, and even ran up with Harriet to London to use his influence for the same purpose with the Duke of Norfolk. On this occasion he made the personal acquaintance of the Godwin family.

Life at Tanyrallt was smooth and studious, except for the diversion caused by the peril to the embankment. We hear of Harriet continuing her Latin studies, reading Odes of Horace, and projecting an epistle in that language to Hogg. Shelley, as usual, collected many books around him. There are letters extant in which

he writes to London for Spinoza and Kant, Plato, and the works of the chief Greek historians. It appears that at this period, under the influence of Godwin, he attempted to conquer a strong national dislike for history. "I am determined to apply myself to a study which is hateful and disgusting to my very soul, but which is above all studies necessary for him who would be listened to as a mender of antiquated abuses,—I mean, that record of crimes and miseries—history." Although he may have made an effort to apply himself to historical reading, he was not successful. His true bias inclined him to metaphysics coloured by a glowing fancy, and to poetry penetrated with speculative enthusiasm. In the historic sense he was deficient; and when he made a serious effort at a later period to compose a tragedy upon the death of Charles I., this work was taken up with effort, and finally abandoned.

In the same letters he speaks about a collection of short poems on which he was engaged, and makes frequent allusions to *Queen Mab*. It appears from his own assertion, and from Medwin's biography, that a poem on Queen Mab had been projected and partially written by him at the early age of eighteen. But it was not taken seriously in hand until the spring of 1812; nor was it finished and printed before 1813. The first impression was a private issue of 250 copies, on fine paper, which Shelley distributed to people whom he wished to influence. It was pirated soon after its appearance, and again in 1821 it was given to the public by a bookseller named Clarke. Against the latter republication Shelley energetically protested, disclaiming in a letter addressed to *The Examiner*, from Pisa, June 22, 1821, any interest in a production which he had not even seen for several years. "I doubt not but that it is perfectly worthless in point of literary composition: and that in all that concerns moral and political speculation, as well as in the subtler discriminations of metaphysical and religious doctrine, it is still more crude and immature. I am a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression; and I regret this publication, not so much from literary vanity as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the sacred cause of freedom." This judgment is undoubtedly severe; but, though exaggerated in its condemnation, it, like all Shelley's criticisms on his own works, expresses the truth. We cannot include *Queen Mab*, in spite of its sonorous rhetoric and fervid declamation, in the canon of his masterpieces. It had a *succés de scandale* on its first appearance, and fatally injured Shelley's reputation. As a work of art it lacks maturity and permanent vitality.

The Shelleys were suddenly driven away from Tanyrallt by a mysterious occurrence, of which no satisfactory explanation has yet been given. According to letters written by himself and Harriet soon after the event, and confirmed by the testimony of Eliza, Shelley was twice attacked upon the night of Feb. 24 by an armed ruffian, with whom he struggled in a hand-to-hand combat. Pistols were fired and windows broken, and Shelley's nightgown was shot through: but the assassin made his escape from the house without

being recognised. His motive and his personality still remain matters of conjecture. Whether the whole affair was a figment of Shelley's brain, rendered more than usually susceptible by laudanum taken to assuage intense physical pain; whether it was a perilous hoax played upon him by the Irish servant, Daniel Hill; or whether, as he himself surmised, the crime was instigated by an unfriendly neighbour, it is impossible to say. Strange adventures of this kind, blending fact and fancy in a now inextricable tangle, are of no unfrequent occurrence in Shelley's biography. In estimating the relative proportions of the two factors in this case, it must be borne in mind, on the one hand, that no one but Shelley, who was alone in the parlour, and who for some unexplained reason had loaded his pistols on the evening before the alleged assault, professed to have seen the villain; and, on the other, that the details furnished by Harriet, and confirmed at a subsequent period by so hostile a witness as Eliza, are too circumstantial to be lightly set aside.

On the whole it appears most probable that Shelley on this night was the subject of a powerful hallucination. The theory of his enemies at Tanyrallt, that the story had been invented to facilitate his escape from the neighbourhood without paying his bills, may be dismissed. But no investigation on the spot could throw any clear light on the circumstance, and Shelley's friends, Hogg, Peacock, and Mr. Madocks, concurred in regarding the affair as a delusion.

There was no money in the common purse of the Shelleys at this moment. In their distress they applied to Mr. T. Hookham, a London publisher, who sent them enough to carry them across the Irish Channel. After a short residence in 35, Cuffe Street, Dublin, and a flying visit to Killarney, they returned to London. Eliza, for some reason as unexplained as the whole episode of this second visit to Ireland, was left behind for a short season. The flight from Tanyrallt closes the first important period of Shelley's life; and his settlement in London marks the beginning of another, fruitful of the gravest consequences and decisive of his future.

CHAPTER IV.

SECOND RESIDENCE IN LONDON, AND SEPARATION FROM HARRIET.

EARLY in May the Shelleys arrived in London, where they were soon joined by Eliza, from whose increasingly irksome companionship the poet had recently enjoyed a few weeks' respite. After living for a short while in hotels, they took lodgings in Half Moon Street. The house had a projecting window, where the poet loved to sit with book in hand, and catch, according to his custom, the maximum of sunlight granted by a chary English summer. "He wanted," said one of his female admirers, "only a pan of clear water and a fresh turf to look like some young lady's lark, hanging outside for air and song." According to Hogg, this period of London life was a pleasant and tranquil episode in Shelley's troubled career. His room was full of books, among which works of German metaphysics occupied a prominent place, though they were not deeply studied. He was now learning Italian, and made his first acquaintance with Tasso, Ariosto, and Petrarch.

The habits of the household were, to say the least, irregular; for Shelley took no thought of sublunary matters, and Harriet was an indifferent housekeeper. Dinner seems to have come to them less by forethought than by the operation of divine chance; and when there was no meat provided for the entertainment of casual guests, the table was supplied with buns, procured by Shelley from the nearest pastry-cook. He had already abjured animal food and alcohol; and his favorite diet consisted of pulse or bread, which he ate dry with water, or made into panada. Hogg relates how, when he was walking in the streets and felt hungry, he would dive into a baker's shop and emerge with a loaf tucked under his arm. This he consumed as he went along, very often reading at the same time, and dodging the foot-passengers with the rapidity of movement which distinguished him. He could not comprehend how any man should want more than bread. "I have dropped a word a hint," says Hogg, "about a pudding; a pudding, Bysshe said dogmatically, is a prejudice." This indifference to diet was highly characteristic of Shelley. During the last years of his life, even when he was suffering from the frequent attacks of a painful disorder, he took no heed of food; and his friend, Trelawny, attributes the derangement of his health, in a great measure, to this careless-

ness. Mrs. Shelley used to send him something to eat into the room where he habitually studied; but the plate frequently remained untouched for hours upon a bookshelf, and at the end of the day he might be heard asking, "Mary, have I dined?" His dress was no less simple than his diet. Hogg says that he never saw him in a great coat, and that his collar was unbuttoned to let the air play freely on his throat. "In the street or road he reluctantly wore a hat; but in fields and gardens, his little round head had no other covering than his long, wild, ragged locks." Shelley's head, as is well known, was remarkably small and round; he used to plunge it several times a day in cold water, and expose it recklessly to the intensest heat of fire or sun. Mrs. Shelley relates that a great part of the *Cenci* was written on their house-roof near Leghorn, where Shelley lay exposed to the unmitigated ardour of Italian summer heat; and Hogg describes him reading Homer by a blazing fire-light, or roasting his skull upon the hearth-rug by the hour.

These personal details cannot be omitted by the biographer of such a man as Shelley. He was an elemental and primeval creature, as little subject to the laws of custom in his habits as in his modes of thought, living literally as the spirit moved him, with a natural nonchalance that has perhaps been never surpassed. To time and place he was equally indifferent, and could not be got to remember his engagements. "He took strange caprices, unfounded frights and dislikes, vain apprehensions and panic terrors, and therefore he absented himself from formal and sacred engagements. He was unconscious and oblivious of times, places, persons, and seasons; and falling into some poetic vision, some day-dream, he quickly and completely forgot all that he had repeatedly and solemnly promised; or he ran away after some object of imaginary urgency and importance, which suddenly came into his head, setting off in vain pursuit of it, he knew not whither. When he was caught, brought up in custody, and turned over to the ladies, with, Behold, your King! to be caressed, courted, admired, and flattered, the king of beauty and fancy would too commonly bolt; slip away, steal out, creep off; unobserved and almost magically he vanished; thus mysteriously depriving his fair subjects of his much-coveted, long looked-for company." If he had been fairly caged and found himself in congenial company, he let time pass unheeded, sitting up all night to talk, and chaining his audience by the spell of his unrivalled eloquence; for wonderful as was his poetry, those who enjoyed the privilege of converse with him, judge it even more attractive. "He was commonly most communicative, unreserved, and eloquent, and enthusiastic, when those around him were inclining to yield to the influence of sleep, or rather at the hour when they would have been disposed to seek their chambers, but for the bewitching charms of his discourse."

From Half Moon Street the Shelleys moved into a house in Pimlico; and it was here, according to Hogg, or at Cooke's Hotel in Dover Street according to other accounts, that Shelley's first child Ianthe Eliza, was born about the end of June, 1813. Harriet

did not take much to her little girl, and gave her over to a wet-nurse, for whom Shelley conceived a great dislike. That a mother should not nurse her own baby was no doubt contrary to his principles; and the double presence of the servant and Eliza, whom he now most cordially detested, made his home uncomfortable. We have it on excellent authority, that of Mr. Peacock, that he "was extremely fond of it (the child), and would walk up and down a room with it in his arms for a long time together, singing to it a song of his own making, which ran on the repetition of a word of his own coining. His song was Yáhmani, Yáhmahi, Yáhmani, Yáhmani." To the want of sympathy between the father and the mother in this matter of Ianthe, Mr. Peacock is inclined to attribute the beginning of troubles in the Shelley household. There is, indeed, no doubt that the revelation of Harriet's maternal coldness must have been extremely painful to her husband; and how far she carried her insensibility, may be gathered from a story told by Hogg about her conduct during an operation performed upon the child.

During this period of his sojourn in London, Shelley was again in some pecuniary difficulties. Yet he indulged Harriet's vanity by setting up in a carriage, in which they afterwards took a hurried journey to Edinburgh and back. He narrowly escaped a debtor's prison through this act of extravagance, and by a somewhat ludicrous mistake Hogg was arrested for the debt due to the coach-maker. His acquaintances were few and scattered, and he saw nothing of his family. Gradually, however, he seems to have become a kind of prophet in a coterie of learned ladies. The views he had propounded in *Queen Mab*, his passionate belief in the perfectibility of man, his vegetarian doctrines, and his readiness to adopt any new nostrum for the amelioration of the race, endeared him to all manners of strange people; nor was he deterred by aristocratic prejudices from frequenting society which proved extremely uncongenial to Hogg, and of which we have accordingly some caustic sketches from his pen. His chief friends were a Mrs. Boinville, for whom he conceived an enthusiasic admiration, and her daughter Cornelia, married to a vegetarian, Mr. Newton. In order to be near them he had moved to Pimlico; and his next move, from London to a cottage named High Elms, at Bracknell, in Berkshire, had the same object. With Godwin and his family he was also on terms of familiar intercourse. Under the philosopher's roof in Skinner Street there was now gathered a group of miscellaneous inmates—Fanny Imlay, the daughter of his first wife, Mary Wollstonecraft; Mary, his own daughter by the same marriage; his second wife, and her two children, Claire and Charles Clairmont, the offspring of a previous union. From this connexion with the Godwin household events of the greatest importance in the future were destined to arise, and already it appears that Fanny Imlay had begun to look with perilous approval on the fascinating poet. Hogg and Mr. Peacock, the well-known novelist, described by Mrs. Newton as "a cold scholar, who, I think, has neither taste nor feeling," were his only intimates.

Mrs. Newton's unfair judgment of Mr. Peacock marks a discord between the two chief elements of Shelley's present society; and indeed it will appear to a careful student of his biography that Hogg, Peacock, and Harriet, now stood somewhat by themselves and aloof from the inner circle of his associates. If we regard the Shelleys as the centre of an extended line, we shall find the Westbrook family at one end, the Boinville family at the other, with Hogg and Peacock somewhere in the middle. Harriet was naturally drawn to the Westbrook extremity, and Shelley to the Boinville. Peacock had no affinity for either, but a sincere regard for Harriet as well as for her husband; while Hogg was in much the same position, except that he had made friends with Mrs. Newton. The Godwins, of great importance to Shelley himself, exercised their influence at a distance from the rest. Frequent change from Bracknell to London and back again, varied by the flying journey to Edinburgh, and a last visit paid in strictest secrecy to his mother and sisters, at Field Place, of which a very interesting record is left in the narrative of Mr. Kennedy, occupied the interval between July, 1813, and March, 1814. The period was not productive of literary masterpieces. We only hear of a *Refutation of Deism*, a dialogue between Eusebes and Theosophus, which attacked all forms of Theistic belief.

Since we are now approaching the greatest crisis in Shelley's life, it behoves us to be more than usualy careful in considering his circumstances, at this epoch. His home had become cold and dull. Harriet did not love her child, and spent her time in a great measure with her Mount Street relations. Eliza was a sourse of continual irritation, and the Westbrook family did its best. by interference and suggestion, to refrigerate the poet's feelings for his wife. On the other hand he found among the Boinville set exactly that high-flown, enthusiastic, sentimental atmosphere which suited his idealizing temper. Two extracts from a letter written to Hogg upon the 16th of March, 1814, speak more eloquently than any analysis, and will place before the reader the antagonism which had sprung up in Shelley's mind between his own home and the circle of his own friends:—"I have been staying with Mrs. B——— for the last month: I have escaped, in the society of all that philosophy and friendship combine, from the dismaying solitude of myself. They have revived in my heart the expiring flame of life. I have felt myself translated to a paradise, which has nothing of mortality but its transitoriness; my heart sickens at the view of that necessity, which will quickly divide me from the delightful tranquillity of this happy home,—for it has become my home. The trees, the bridge, the minutest objects, have already a place in my affections."

"Eliza is still with us—not here!—but will be with me when the infinite malice of destiny forces me to depart. I am now but little inclined to contest this point. I certainly hate her with all my heart and soul. It is a sight which awakens an inexpressible sensation of disgust and horror, to see her caress my poor little Ianthe, in whom I may hereafter find the consolation of sympathy.

I sometimes feel faint with the fatigue of checking the overflowings of my unbounded abhorrence for this miserable wretch. But she is no more than a blind and loathsome worm, that cannot see to sting."

While divided in this way between a home which had become distasteful to him and a house where he found scope for his most romantic outpourings of sensibility, Shelley fell suddenly and passionately in love with Godwin's daughter, Mary. Peacock, who lived in close intimacy with him at this period, must deliver his testimony as to the overwhelming nature of the new attachment:—"Nothing that I ever read in tale or history could present a more striking image of a sudden, violent, irresistible, uncontrollable passion, than that under which I found him labouring when, at his request, I went up from the country to call on him in London. Between his old feelings towards Harriet, *from whom he was not then separated*, and his passion for Mary, he showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of a mind 'suffering, like a little kingdom, the nature of an insurrection.' His eyes were bloodshot, his hair and dress disordered. He caught up a bottle of laudanum, and said, 'I never part from this.'"

We may therefore affirm, I think, with confidence that in the winter and spring of 1814, Shelley had been becoming gradually more and more estranged from Harriet, whose commonplace nature was no mate for his, and whom he had never loved with all the depth of his affection; that his intimacy with the Boinville family had brought into painful prominence whatever was jarring and repugnant to him in his home; and that in this crisis of his fate he had fallen in love for the first time seriously with Mary Godwin.* She was then a girl of sixteen, "fair and fair-haired, pale indeed, and with a piercing look," to quote Hogg's description of her, as she first appeared before him on the 8th or 9th of June, 1814. With her freedom from prejudice, her tense and high-wrought sensibility, her acute intellect, enthusiasm for ideas, and vivid imagination, Mary Godwin was naturally a fitter companion for Shelley than the good Harriet, however beautiful.

That Shelley early in 1814 had no intention of leaving his wife, is probable; for he was re-married to her on the 24th of March, eight days after his impassioned letter to Hogg, in St. George's, Hanover Square. Harriet was pregnant, and this ratification of the Scotch marriage was no doubt intended to place the legitimacy of a possible heir beyond all question. Yet it seems, if we may found conjecture on "Stanzas, April, 1814," that in the very month after this new ceremony Shelley found the difficulties of his wedded life insuperable, and that he was already making up his mind to part from Harriet. About the middle of June the separation actually occurred—not by mutual consent, so far as any published documents throw light upon the matter, but rather by Shelley's

* The date at which he first made Mary's acquaintance is uncertain. Peacock says that it was between April 18 and June 8.

sudden abandonment of his wife and child.* For a short while Harriet was left in ignorance of his abode, and with a very insufficient sum of money at her disposal. She placed herself under the protection of her father, retired to Bath, and about the beginning of July received a letter from Shelley, who was thenceforth solicitous for her welfare, keeping up a correspondence with her, supplying her with funds, and by no means shrinking from personal communications.

That Shelley must bear the responsibility of this separation seems to me quite clear. His justification is to be found in his avowed opinions on the subject of love and marriage—opinions which Harriet knew well and professed to share, and of which he had recently made ample confession in the notes to *Queen Mab*. The world will still agree with Lord Eldon in regarding those opinions as dangerous to society, and a blot upon the poet's character; but it would be unfair, while condemning them as frankly as he professed them, to blame him also because he did not conform to the opposite code of morals, for which he frequently expressed extreme abhorrence, and which he stigmatised, however wrongly, as the source of the worst social vices. It must be added that the Shelley family in their memorials of the poet, and through their friend, Mr. Richard Garnett, inform us, without casting any slur on Harriet, that documents are extant which will completely vindicate the poet's conduct in the matter. It is therefore but just to await their publication before pronouncing a decided judgment. Meanwhile there remains no doubt about the fact that forty days after leaving Harriet, Shelley departed from London with Mary Godwin, who had consented to share his fortunes. How he plighted his new troth, and won the hand of her who was destined to be his companion for life, may best be told in Lady Shelley's words !—

"His anguish, his isolation, his difference from other men, his gifts of genius and eloquent enthusiasm, made a deep impression on Godwin's daughter Mary, now a girl of sixteen, who had been accustomed to hear Shelley spoken of as something rare and strange. To her, as they met one eventful day in St. Pancras Churchyard, by her mother's grave, Bysshe, in burning words, poured forth the tale of his wild past—how he had suffered, how he had been misled, and how, if supported by her love, he hoped in future years to enrol his name with the wise and good who had done battle for their fellow-men, and been true through all adverse storms to the cause of humanity. Unhesitatingly, she placed her hand in his, and linked her fortune with his own: and most truthfully, as the remaining portions of these Memorials will prove, was the pledge of both redeemed. The theories in which the daughter of the authors of *Political Justice*, and of the *Rights of Woman*, had been educated, spared her from any conflict between her duty and her affection. For she was the child of parents whose writings had had for their

* Leigh Hunt, Autob. p. 236, and Medwin, however, both assert that it was by mutual consent. The whole question must be studied in Peacock and in Garnett, Relics of Shelley, p. 147.

object to prove that marriage was one among the many institutions which a new era in the history of mankind was about to sweep away. By her father, whom she loved—by the writings of her mother, whom she had been taught to venerate—these doctrines had been rendered familiar to her mind. It was therefore natural that she should listen to the dictates of her own heart, and willingly unite her fate with one who was so worthy of her love."

Soon after her withdrawal to Bath, Harriet gave birth to Shelley's second child, Charles Bysshe, who died in 1826. She subsequently formed another connexion which proved unhappy; and on the 10th of November, 1816, she commited suicide by drowning herself in the Serpentine. The distance of time between June, 1814, and November, 1816, and the new ties formed by Harriet in this interval, prove that there was no immediate connexion between Shelley's abandonment of his wife and her suicide. She had always entertained the thought of self-destruction, as Hogg, who is no adverse witness in her case, has amply recorded; and it may be permitted us to suppose that, finding herself for the second time unhappy in her love, she reverted to a long-since cherished scheme, and cut the knot of life and all its troubles.

So far as this is possible, I have attempted to narrate the most painful episode in Shelley's life as it occurred, without extenuation and without condemnation. Until the papers, mentioned with such insistence by Lady Shelley and Mr. Garnett, are given to the world, it is impossible that the poet should not bear the reproach of heartlessness and inconstancy in this the gravest of all human relations. Such, however, is my belief in the essential goodness of his character, after allowing, as we must do, for the operation of his peculiar principles upon his conduct, that I for my own part am willing to suspend my judgment till the time arrives for his vindication. The language used by Lady Shelley and Mr. Garnett justify us in expecting that that vindication will be as startling as complete. If it is not, they, as pleading for him, will have overshot the mark of prudence.

On the 28th of July Shelley left London with Mary Godwin, who up to this date had remained beneath her father's roof. There was some secrecy in their departure, because they were accompanied by Miss Clairmont, whose mother disapproved of her forming a third in the party. Having made their way to Dover, they crossed the Channel in an open boat, and went at once to Paris. Here they hired a donkey for their luggage, intending to perform the journey across France on foot. Shelley, however, sprained his ancle, and a mule-carriage was provided for the party. In this conveyance they reached the Jura, and entered Switzerland at Neufchatel. Brünnen, on the Lake of Lucerne, was chosen for their residence; and here Shelley began his romantic tale of *The Assassins*, a portion of which is printed in his prose works. Want of money compelled them soon to think of turning their steps homeward; and the back journey was performed upon the Reuss and Rhine. They reached Gravesend, after a bad passage, on the 13th

of September. Mrs. Shelley's *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* relates the details of this trip, which was of great importance in forming Shelley's taste, and in supplying him with the scenery of river, rock, and mountain, so splendidly utilised in *Alastor*.

The autumn was a period of more than usual money difficulty; but on the 6th of January, 1815, Sir Bysshe died, Percy became the next heir to the baronetcy and the family estates, and an arrangement was made with his father by right of which he received an allowance of 1000*l.* a year. A portion of his income was immediately set apart for Harriet. The winter was passed in London, where Shelley walked a hospital, in order, it is said, to acquire some medical knowledge that might be of service to the poor he visited. His own health at this period was very bad. A physician whom he consulted pronounced that he was rapidly sinking under pulmonary disease, and he suffered frequent attacks of acute pain. The consumptive symptoms seem to have been so marked that for the next three years he had no doubt that he was destined to an early death. In 1818, however, all danger of phthisis passed away; and during the rest of his short life he only suffered from spasms and violent pains in the side, which baffled the physicians, but, though they caused him extreme anguish, did not menace any vital organ. To the subject of his health it will be necessary to return at a later period of this biography. For the present it is enough to remember that his physical condition was such as to justify his own expectation of death at no distant time.*

Fond as ever of wandering, Shelley set out in the early summer for a tour with Mary. They visited Devonshire and Clifton, and then settled in a house on Bishopsgate Heath, near Windsor Forest. The summer was further broken by a water excursion up the Thames to its source, in the company of Mr. Peacock and Charles Clairmont. Peacock traces the poet's taste for boating, which afterwards became a passion with him, to this excursion. About this there is, however, some doubt. Medwin tells us that Shelley while a boy delighted in being on the water, and that he enjoyed the pastime at Eton. On the other hand, Mr. W. S. Halliday, a far better authority than Medwin, asserts positively that he never saw Shelley on the river at Eton, and Hogg relates nothing to prove that he practised rowing at Oxford. It is certain that, though inordinately fond of boats and every kind of water—river, sea, lake, or canal—he never learned to swim. Peacock also notices his habit of floating paper boats, and gives an amusing description of the boredom suffered by Hogg on occasions when Shelley would stop by the side of pond or mere to float a mimic navy. The not altogether apocryphal story of his having once constructed a boat out of a bank-post-bill, and launched it on the lake in Kensington Gardens, deserves to be alluded to in this connexion.

On their return from this river journey, Shelley began the poem of *Alastor*, haunting the woodland glades and oak groves of Wind-

* See Letter to Godwin in Shelley's Memorials, p. 78.

sor Forest, and drawing from that noble scenery his inspiration. It was printed with a few other poems in one volume the next year. Not only was *Alastor* the first serious poem published by Shelley; but it was also the first of his compositions which revealed the greatness of his genius. Rarely has blank verse been written with more majesty and music: and while the influence of Milton and Wordsworth may be traced in certain passages, the versification, tremulous with lyrical vibrations, is such as only Shelley could have produced.

"Alastor" is the Greek name for a vengeful dæmon, driving its victim into desert places; and Shelley, prompted by Peacock, chose it for the title of a poem which describes the Nemesis of solitary souls. Apart from its intrinsic merit as a work of art, *Alastor* has great autobiographical value. Mrs. Shelley affirms that it was written under the expectation of speedy death, and under the sense of disappointment, consequent upon the misfortunes of his early life. This accounts for the somewhat unhealthy vein of sentiment which threads the wilderness of its sublime descriptions. All that Shelley had observed of natural beauty—in Wales, at Lynton, in Switzerland, upon the eddies of the Reuss, beneath the oak shades of the forest—is presented to us in a series of pictures penetrated with profound emotion. But the deeper meaning of *Alastor* is to be found, not in the thought of death nor in the poet's recent communings with nature, but in the motto from St. Augustine placed upon its title-page, and in the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, composed about a year later. Enamoured of ideal loveliness, the poet pursues his vision through the universe, vainly hoping to assuage the thirst which has been stimulated in his spirit, and vainly longing for some mortal realisation of his love. *Alastor*, like *Epipsychidion*, reveals the mistake which Shelley made in thinking that the idea of beauty could become incarnate for him in any earthly from: while the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* recognises the truth that such realization of the ideal is impossible. The very last letter written by Shelley sets the misconception in its proper light: "I think one is always in love with something or other; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal." But this Shelley discovered only with "the years that bring the philosophic mind," and when he was upon the very verge of his untimely death.

The following quotation is a fair specimen of the blank verse of *Alastor*. It expresses that longing for perfect sympathy in an ideal love, which the sense of divine beauty had stirred in the poet's heart:—

> At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore
> He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
> Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
> His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
> Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
> It rose as he approached, and, with strong wings

Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight :—"Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird ! thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts ? " A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For Sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge, and silent Death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as Sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

William, the eldest son of Shelley and Mary Godwin, was born on the 24th of Jan., 1816. In the spring of that year they went together, accompanied by Miss Clairmont, for a second time to Switzerland. They reached Geneva on the 17th of May, and were soon after joined by Lord Byron and his travelling physician, Dr. Polidori. Shelley had not yet made Byron's acquaintance, though he had sent him a copy of *Queen Mab*, with a letter, which miscarried in the post. They were now thrown into daily intercourse, occupying the villas Diodati and Mont Alégre, at no great distance from each other, passing their days upon the lake in a boat which they purchased, and spending the nights in conversation. Miss Clairmont had known Byron in London, and their acquaintance now ripened into an intimacy, the fruit of which was the child Allegra. This fact has to be mentioned by Shelley's biographer, because Allegra afterwards became an inmate of his home ; and though he and Mary were ignorant of what was passing at Geneva, they did not withdraw their sympathy from the mother or Lord Byron's daughter. The lives of Byron and Shelley during the next six years were destined to be curiously blent. Both were to seek in Italy an exile-home : while their friendship was to become one of the most interesting facts of English literary history. The influence of Byron upon Shelley, as he more than once acknowledged, and as his wife plainly perceived, was, to a great extent, depressing. For Byron's genius and its fruits in poetry he entertained the highest possible opinion. He could not help comparing his own achievement and his fame with Byron's ; and the result was that in the presence of one whom he erroneously believed to be the greater poet, he became inactive. Shelley on the contrary, stimulated Byron's productive faculty to nobler efforts, raised his moral tone, and infused into his less subtle intellect something of his own philosophical depth and earnestness. Much as he enjoyed Byron's society and admired his writing, Shelley was not blind to the imperfections of his nature. The sketch

which he has left us of Count Maddalo, the letters, written to his wife from Venice and Ravenna, and his correspondence on the subject of Leigh Hunt's visit to Italy, supply the most discriminating criticism which has yet been passed upon his brother poet's character. It is clear that he never found in Byron a perfect friend, and that he had not accepted him as one with whom he sympathised upon the deeper questions of feeling and conduct. Byron, for his part, recognised in Shelley the purest nature he had ever known. "He was the most gentle, the most amiable, and least worldly-minded person I ever met; full of delicacy, disinterested beyond all other men, and possessing a degree of genius joined to simplicity as rare as it is admirable. He had formed to himself a *beau ideal* of all that is fine, high-minded, and noble, and he acted up to this ideal even to the very letter."

Toward the end of June the two poets made the tour of Lake Geneva in their boat, and were very nearly wrecked off the rocks of Meillerie. On this occasion Shelley was in imminent danger of death from drowning. His one anxiety, however, as he wrote to Peacock, was lest Byron should attempt to save him at the risk of his own life. Byron described him as "bold as a lion;" and indeed it may here be said, once and for all, that Shelley's physical courage was only equalled by his moral fearlessness. He carried both without bravado to the verge of temerity, and may justly be said to have never known what terror was. Another summer excursion was a visit to Chamouni, of which he has left memorable descriptions in his letters to Peacock, and in the somewhat Coleridgian verses on Mont Blanc. The preface to *Laon and Cythna* shows what a powerful impression had been made upon him by the glaciers, and how he delighted in the element of peril. There is a tone of exultation in the words which record the experiences of his two journeys in Switzerland and France:—"I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes and the sea, and the solitude of forests. Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the most visible ravages of tyranny and war, cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon the desolated thresholds."

On their return to the lake, the Shelleys found M. G. Lewis established with Byron. This addition to the circle introduced much conversation about apparitions, and each member of the party undertook to produce a ghost story. Polidori's *Vampyre* and Mrs. Shelley's *Frankenstein* were the only durable results of their determination. But an incident occurred which is of some im-

portance in the history of Shelley's psychological condition. Toward midnight on the 18th of July, Byron recited the lines in *Christabel* about the lady's breast; when Shelley suddenly started up, shrieked, and fled from the room. He had seen a vision of a woman with eyes instead of nipples. At this time he was writing notes upon the phenomena of sleep to be inserted in his *Speculations on Metaphysics*, and Mrs. Shelley informs us that the mere effort to remember dreams of thrilling or mysterious import so disturbed his nervous system that he had to relinquish the task. At no period of his life was he wholly free from visions which had the reality of facts. Sometimes they occurred in sleep, and were prolonged with painful vividness into his waking moments. Sometimes they seemed to grow out of his intense meditation, or to present themselves before his eyes as the projection of a powerful inner impression. All his sensations were abnormally acute, and his ever-active imagination confused the border-lands of the actual and the visionary. Such a nature as Shelley's, through its far greater susceptibility than is common even with artistic temperaments, was debarred in moments of high-strung emotion from observing the ordinary distinctions of subject and object; and this peculiar quality must never be forgotten when we seek to estimate the proper proportions of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* in certain episodes of his biography. The strange story, for example, told by Peacock about a supposed warning he had received in the spring of this year from Mr. Williams of Tremadoc, may possibly be explained on the hypothesis that his brooding thoughts had taken form before him, both ear and eye having been unconsciously pressed into the service of a subjective energy.*

On their return to England in September, Shelley took a cottage at Great Marlow on the Thames, in order to be near his friend Peacock. While it was being prepared for the reception of his family, he stayed at Bath, and there heard of Harriet's sucide. The life that once was dearest to him, had ended thus in misery, desertion, want. The mother of his two children, abandoned by both her husband and her lover, and driven from her father's home, had drowned herself after a brief struggle with circumstance. However Shelley may have felt that his conscience was free from blame, however small an element of self-reproach may have mingled with his grief and horror, there is no doubt that he suffered most acutely. His deepest ground for remorse seems to have been the conviction that he had drawn Harriet into a sphere of thought and feeling for which she was not qualified, and that had it not been for him and his opinions, she might have lived a happy woman in some common walk of life. One of his biographers asserts that "he continued to be haunted by certain recollections, partly real and partly imaginative, which pursued him like an Orestes," and even Trelawny, who knew him only in the last months of his life, said that the impression of that dreadful mo-

* Fraser's Magazine, Jan., 1860, p. 98.

ment was still vivid. We may trace the echo of his feelings in some painfully pathetic verses written in 1817;* and though he did not often speak of Harriet, Peacock has recorded one memorable occasion on which he disclosed the anguish of his spirit to a friend.†

Shelley hurried at once to London, and found some consolation in the society of Leigh Hunt. The friendship extended to him by that excellent man at this season of his trouble may perhaps count for something with those who are inclined to judge him harshly. Two important events followed immediately upon the tragedy. The first was Shelley's marriage with Mary Godwin on the 30th of December, 1816. Whether Shelley would have taken this step except under strong pressure from without, appears to me very doubtful. Of all men who ever lived, he was the most resolutely bent on confirming his theories by his practice; and in this instance there was no valid reason why he should not act up to principles professed in common by himself and the partner of his fortunes, no less than by her father and her mother. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that he yielded to arguments; and these arguments must have been urged by Godwin, who had never treated him with cordiality since he left England in 1816. Godwin, though overrated in his generation, and almost ludicrously idealised by Shelley, was a man whose talents verged on genius. But he was by no means consistent. His conduct in money-matters shows that he could not live the life of a self-sufficing philosopher; while the irritation he expressed when Shelley omitted to address him as Esquire, stood in comic contradiction with his published doctrines. We are therefore perhaps justified in concluding that he worried Shelley, the one enthusiastic and thorough-going follower he had, into marrying his daughter in spite of his disciple's protestations; nor shall we be far wrong if we surmise that Godwin congratulated himself on Mary's having won the right to bear the name of a future baronet.

The second event was the refusal of Mr. Westbrook to deliver up the custody of his grandchildren. A chancery suit was instituted; at the conclusion of which, in August, 1817, Lord Eldon deprived Shelley of his son and daughter on the double ground of his opinions expressed in *Queen Mab*, and of his conduct toward his first wife. The children were placed in the hands of a clergyman, to be educated in accordance with principles diametrically opposed to their parent's, while Shelley's income was mulcted in a sum of 200*l.* for their maintenance. Thus sternly did the father learn the value of that ancient Æschylean maxim, τῷ δράσαντι παθεῖν, the doer of the deed must suffer. His own impulsiveness, his reckless assumption of the heaviest responsibilities, his overweening confidence in his own strength to move the weight of the world's opinions, had brought him to this tragic pass—to the suicide of the woman who had loved him, and to the sequestration of the offspring whom he loved.

* Forman. † [illegible] Jan., 1860, p. 102.

Shelley is too great to serve as text for any sermon; and yet we may learn from him as from a hero of Hebrew or Hellenic story. His life was a tragedy; and like some protagonist of Greek drama, he was capable of erring and of suffering greatly. He had kicked against the altar of justice as established in the daily sanctities of human life; and now he had to bear the penalty. The conventions he despised and treated like the dust beneath his feet were found in this most cruel crisis to be a rock on which his very heart was broken. From this rude trial of his moral nature he arose a stronger being; and if longer life had been granted him, he would undoubtedly have presented the ennobling spectacle of one who had been lessoned by his own audacity, and by its bitter fruits, into harmony with the immutable laws which he was ever seeking to obey. It is just this conflict between the innate rectitude of Shelley's over-daring nature and the circumstances of ordinary existence, which makes his history so tragic; and we may justly wonder whether, when he read the Sophoclean tragedies of Œdipus, he did not apply their doctrine of self-will and Nemesis to his own fortunes.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE AT MARLOW, AND JOURNEY TO ITALY.

Amid the torturing distractions of the Chancery suit about his children, and the still more poignant anguish of his own heart, and with the cloud of what he thought swift-coming death above his head, Shelley worked steadily, during the summer of 1817, upon his poem of *Laon and Cythna.* Six months were spent in this task. "The poem," to borrow Mrs. Shelley's words, "was written in his boat, as it floated under the beech-groves of Bisham, or during wanderings in the neighbouring country, which is distinguished for peculiar beauty." Whenever Shelley could, he composed in the open air. The terraces of the Villa Cappuccini at Este and the Baths of Caracalla were the birthplace of *Prometheus. The Cenci* was written on the roof of the Villa Valsovano at Leghorn. The Cascine of Florence, the pine-woods near Pisa, the lawns above San Giuliano, and the summits of the Euganean Hills, witnessed the creation of his loveliest lyrics; and his last great poem, the *Triumph of Life*, was transferred to paper in his boat upon the Bay of Spezia.

If *Alastor* had expressed one side of Shelley's nature, his devotion to Ideal Beauty, *Laon and Cythna* was in a far profounder sense representative of its author. All his previous experiences and all his aspirations—his passionate belief in friendship, his principle of the equality of women with men, his demand for bloodless revolution, his confidence in eloquence and reason to move nations, his doctrine of free love, his vegetarianism, his hatred of religious intolerance and tyranny—are blent together and concentrated in the glowing cantos of this wonderful romance. The hero, Laon, is himself idealised, the self which he imagined when he undertook his Irish campaign. The heroine, Cythna, is the helpmate he had always dreamed, the woman exquisitely feminine, yet capable of being fired with male enthusiasms, and of grappling the real problems of our nature with a man's firm grasp. In the first edition of the poem he made Laon and Cythna brother and sister, not because he believed in the desirability of incest, but because he wished to throw a glove down to society, and to attack the intolerance of custom in its stronghold. In the preface, he tells us that it was his purpose to kindle in the bosoms of his readers "a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope

in something good, which neither violence, nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever wholly extinguish among mankind;" to illustrate "the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind;" and to celebrate Love "as the sole law which should govern the moral world." The wild romantic treatment of this didactic motive makes the poem highly characteristic of its author. It is written in Spenserian stanzas, with a rapidity of movement and a dazzling brilliance that are Shelley's own. The story relates the kindling of a nation to freedom at the cry of a young poet-prophet, the temporary triumph of the good cause, the final victory of despotic force, and the martyrdrom of the hero, together with whom the heroine falls a willing victim. It is full of thrilling incidents and lovely pictures; yet the tale is the least part of the poem; and few readers have probably been able either to sympathise with its visionary characters, or to follow the narrative without weariness. As in the case of other poems by Shelley—especially those in which he attempted to tell a story, for which kind of art his genius was not well suited—the central motive of *Laon and Cythna* is surrounded by so radiant a photosphere of imagery and eloquence that it is difficult to fix our gaze upon it, blinded as we are by the excess of splendour. Yet no one now can read the terrible tenth canto, or the lovely fifth, without feeling that a young eagle of poetry had here tried the full strength of his pinions in their flight. This truth was by no means recognised when *Laon and Cythna* first appeared before the public. Hooted down, derided, stigmatised, and howled at, it only served to intensify the prejudice with which the author of *Queen Mab* had come to be regarded.

I have spoken of this poem under its first name of *Laon and Cythna*. A certain number of copies were issued with this title;* but the publisher, Ollier, not without reason dreaded the effect the book would make; he therefore induced Shelley to alter the relationship between the hero and his bride, and issued the old sheets with certain cancelled pages under the title of *Revolt of Islam*. It was published in January, 1818. While still resident at Marlow Shelley began two autobiographical poems—the one *Prince Athanase* which he abandoned as too introspective and morbidly self-analytical, the other *Rosalind and Helen*, which he finished afterwards in Italy. Of the second of these compositions he entertained a poor opinion; nor will it bear comparison with his best work. To his biographer its chief interest consists in the character of Lionel, drawn less perhaps exactly from himself than as an ideal of the man he would have wished to be. The poet in *Alastor*, Laon in the *Revolt of Islam*, Lionel in *Rosalind and Helen*, and Prince Athanase, are in fact a remarkable row of self-portraits, varying in the tone and scale of idealistic treatment bestowed upon them. Later on in life, Shelley outgrew this preoccupation with his ideal-

* How many copies were put in circulation is not known. There must certainly have been many more than the traditional three, for when I was a boy at Harrow, I picked up two uncut copies in boards at a Bristol bookshop, for the price of 2*s.* 6*d.* a piece.

ised self, and directed his genius to more objective themes. Yet the autobiographic tendency, as befitted a poet of the highest lyric type, remained to the end a powerful characteristic.

Before quitting the first period of Shelley's development, it may be well to set before the reader a specimen of that self-delineative poetry which characterised it; and since it is difficult to detach a single passage from the continuous stanzas of *Laon and Cythna*, I have chosen the lines in *Rosalind and Helen* which describe young Lionel:

To Lionel,
Though of great wealth and lineage high,
Yet through those dungeon walls there came
Thy thrilling light, O Liberty!
And as the meteor's midnight flame
Startles the dreamer, sun-like truth
Flashed on his visionary youth,
And filled him, not with love, but faith,
And hope, and courage mute in death;
For love and life in him were twins,
Born at one birth: in every other
First life, then love its course begins,
Though they be children of one mother;
And so through this dark world they fleet
Divided, till in death they meet:
But he loved all things ever. Then
He past amid the strife of men,
And stood at the throne of armèd power
Pleading for a world of woe:
Secure as one on a rock-built tower
O'er the wrecks which the surge trails to and fro,
'Mid the passions wild of human kind
He stood, like a spirit calming them;
For, it was said, his words could find
Like music the lulled crowd, and stem
That torrent of unquiet dream,
Which mortals truth and reason deem,
But *is* revenge and fear and pride.
Joyous he was; and hope and peace
On all who heard him did abide,
Raining like dew from his sweet talk,
As where the evening star may walk
Along the brink of the gloomy seas,
Liquid mists of splendour quiver.
His very gestures touch'd to tears
The unpersuaded tyrant, never
So moved before: his presence stung
The torturers with their victim's pain,
And none knew how; and through their ears,
The subtle witchcraft of his tongue
Unlocked the hearts of those who keep
Gold, the world's bond of slavery.
Men wondered, and some sneer'd to see
One sow what he could never reap:
For he is rich, they said, and young,

And might drink from the depths of luxury.
If he seeks Fame, Fame never crown'd
The champion of a trampled creed:
If he seeks Power, Power is enthroned
'Mid ancient rights and wrongs, to feed
Which hungry wolves with praise and spoil,
Those who would sit near Power must toil;
And such, there sitting, all may see.

During the year he spent at Marlow, Shelley was a frequent visitor at Leigh Hunt's Hampstead house, where he made acquaintance with Keats, and the brothers Smith, authors of *Rejected Addresses*. Hunt's recollections supply some interesting details, which, since Hogg and Peacock fail us at this period, may be profitably used. Describing the manner of his life at Marlow, Hunt writes as follows: "He rose early in the morning, walked and read before breakfast, took that meal sparingly, wrote and studied the greater part of the morning, walked and read again, dined on vegetables (for he took neither meat nor wine), conversed with his friends (to whom his house was ever open), again walked out, and usually finished with reading to his wife till ten o'clock, when he went to bed. This was his daily existence. His book was generally Plato, or Homer, or one of the Greek tragedians, or the Bible, in which last he took a great, though peculiar, and often admiring interest. One of his favourite parts was the book of Job." Mrs. Shelley, in her note on the *Revolt of Islam*, confirms this account of his Bible studies; and indeed the influence of the Old Testament upon his style may be traced in several of his poems. In the same paragraph from which I have just quoted, Leigh Hunt gives a just notion of his relation to Christianity, pointing out that he drew a distinction between the Pauline presentation of the Christian creeds, and the spirit of the Gospels. "His want of faith in the letter, and his exceeding faith in the spirit of Christianity, formed a comment, the one on the other, very formidable to those who chose to forget what Scripture itself observes on that point." We have only to read *Essays on Christianity*, in order to perceive what reverent admiration he felt for Jesus, and how profoundly he understood the true character of his teaching. That work, brief as it is, forms one of the most valuable extant contributions to a sound theology, and is morally far in advance of the opinions expressed by many who regard themselves as specially qualified to speak on the subject. It is certain that, as Christianity passes beyond its mediæval phase, and casts aside the husk of outworn dogmas, it will more and more approximate to Shelley's exposition. Here and here only is a vital faith, adapted to the conditions of modern thought, indestructible because essential, and fitted to unite instead of separating minds of divers quality. It may sound paradoxical to claim for Shelley of all men a clear insight into the enduring element of the Christian creed; but it was precisely his detachment from all its accidents which enabled him to discern its spiritual purity, and placed him in a true relation to

its Founder. For those who would neither on the one hand relinquish what is permanent in religion, nor yet on the other deny the inevitable conclusions of modern thought, his teaching is indubitably valuable. His fierce tirades against historic Christianity must be taken as directed against an ecclesiastical system of spiritual, tyranny, hypocrisy, and superstition, which in his opinion had retarded the growth of free institutions, and fettered the human intellect. Like Campanella, he distinguished between Christ, who sealed the gospel of charity with his blood, and those Christians who would be the first to crucify their Lord if he returned to earth.

That Shelley lived up to his religious creed is amply proved, To help the needy and to relieve the sick, seemed to him a simple duty which he cheerfully discharged. "His charity, though liberal, was not weak. He inquired personally into the circumstances of his petitioners, visited the sick in their beds, ... and kept a regular list of industrious poor, whom he assisted with small sums to make up their accounts." At Marlow, the miserable condition of the lace-makers called forth all his energies; and Mrs. Shelley tells us that an acute ophthalmia, from which he twice suffered, was contracted in a visit to their cottages. A story told by Leigh Hunt about his finding a woman ill on Hampstead Heath, and carrying her from door to door in the vain hopes of meeting with a man as charitable as himself, until he had to house the poor creature with his friends the Hunts, reads like a practical illustration of Christ's parable about the Good Samaritan. Nor was it merely to the so-called poor that Shelley showed his generosity. His purse was always open to his friends. Peacock received from him an annual allowance of 100*l.* He gave Leigh Hunt, on one occasion, 1400*l.*; and he discharged debts of Godwin, amounting, it is said, to about 6000*l.* In his pamphlet on *Putting Reform to the Vote*, he offered to subscribe 100*l.* for the purpose of founding an association; and we have already seen that he headed the Tremadoc subscription with a sum of 500*l.* These instances of his generosity might be easily multiplied; and when we remember that his present income was 1000*l.*, out of which 200*l.* went to the support of his children, it will be understood not only that he could not live luxuriously, but also that he was in frequent money difficulties through the necessity of raising funds upon his expectations. His self-denial in all minor matters of expenditure was conspicuous. Without a murmur, without ostentation, this heir of the richest baronet in Sussex illustrated by his own conduct those principles of democratic simplicity and of fraternal charity which formed his political and social creed.

A glimpse into the cottage at Great Marlow is afforded by a careless sentence of Leigh Hunt's. "He used to sit in a study adorned with casts, as large as life, of the Vatican Apollo and the celestial Venus." Fancy Shelley with his bright eyes and elf-locks in a tiny, low-roofed room, correcting proofs of *Laon and Cythna*, between the Apollo of the Belvedere and the Venus de' Medici, life-sized, and as crude as casts by Shout could make them! In

this house, Miss Clairmount, with her brother and Allegra, lived as Shelley's guests; and here Clara Shelley was born on the 3rd of September, 1817. In the same autumn, Shelley suffered from a severe pulmonary attack. The critical state of his health, and the apprehension, vouched for by Mrs. Shelley, that the Chancellor might lay his vulture's talons on the children of his second marriage, were the motives which induced him to leave England for Italy in the spring of 1818.* He never returned. Four years only of life were left to him—years filled with music that will sound as long as English lasts.

It was on the 11th of March that the Shelleys took their departure with Miss Clairmont and the child Allegra. They went straight to Milan, and after visiting the Lake of Como, Pisa, the Bagni di Lucca, Venice, and Rome, they settled early in the following December at Naples. Shelley's letters to Peacock form the invaluable record of this period of his existence. Taken altogether, they are the most perfect specimens of descriptive prose in the English language; never over-charged with colour, vibrating with emotions excited by the stimulating scenes of Italy, frank in criticism, and exquisitely delicate in observation. Their transparent sincerity and unpremeditated grace, combined with natural finish of expression, make them masterpieces of a style at once familiar and elevated. That Shelley's sensibility to art was not so highly cultivated as his feeling for nature, is clear enough in many passages: but there is no trace of admiring to order in his comments upon pictures or statues. Familiarity with the great works of antique and Italian art would doubtless have altered some of the opinions he at first expressed; just as longer residence among the people made him modify his views about their character. Meanwhile, the spirit of modest and unprejudiced attention in which he began his studies of sculpture and painting, might well be imitated in the present day by travellers who think that to pin their faith to some famous critic's verdict is the acme of good taste. If there was space for a long quotation from these letters, I should choose the description of Pompeii (Jan. 26, 1819, or that of the Baths of Caracalla (March 23, 1819). As it is, I must content myself with a short but eminently characteristic passage, written from Ferrara, Nov. 7, 1818:—

> The handwriting of Ariosto is a small, firm, and pointed character, expressing, as I should say, a strong and keen, but circumscribed energy of mind; that of Tasso is large, free, and flowing, except that there is a checked expression in the midst of its flow, which brings the letters into a smaller compass than one expected from the beginning of the word. It is the symbol of an intense and earnest mind, exceeding at times its own depth, and admonished to return by the chillness of the waters of oblivion striking upon its adventurous feet. You know I always seek in what I see the manifestation of something beyond the present and tangible object; and as we do not agree in physiognomy, so we may not agree now. But my business is to relate my own sensations, and not to attempt to inspire others with them.

* See Note on Poems of 1819, and Compare the lyric "The billows on the beach."

In the middle of August, Shelley left his wife at the Bagni di Lucca, and paid a visit to Lord Byron at Venice. He arrived at midnight in a thunderstorm. *Julian and Maddalo* was the literary fruit of this excursion—a poem which has rightly been characterised by Mr. Rossetti as the most perfect specimen in our language of the "poetical treatment of ordinary things." The description of a Venetian sunset, touched to sadness amid all its splendour by the gloomy presence of the madhouse, ranks among Shelley's finest word-paintings; while the glimpse of Byron's life is interesting on a lower level. Here is the picture of the sunset and the island of San Lazzaro:—

Oh!
How beautiful is sunset, when the glow
Of heaven descends upon a land like thee,
Thou paradise of exiles, Italy,
Thy mountains, seas, and vineyards, and the towers
Of cities they encircle!—It was ours
To stand on thee, beholding it: and then,
Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men
Were waiting for us with the gondola.
As those who pause on some delightful way,
Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood
Looking upon the evening, and the flood
Which lay between the city and the shore,
Paved with the image of the sky. The hoar
And airy Alps, towards the north, appeared,
Thro' mist, a heaven-sustaining bulwark, reared
Between the east and west; and half the sky
Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry,
Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew
Down the steep west into a wondrous hue
Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent
Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent
Among the many-folded hills. They were
Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,
As seen from Lido through the harbour piles,
The likeness of a clump of peaked isles—
And then, as if the earth and sea had been
Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen
Those mountains towering, as from waves of flame,
Around the vaporous sun, from which there came
The inmost purple spirit of light, and made
Their very peaks transparent. "Ere it fade,"
Said my companion, "I will show you soon
A better station." So, o'er the lagune
We glided; and from that funereal bark
I leaned, and saw the city, and could mark
How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,
Its temples and its palaces did seem
Like fabrics of enchantment piled to heaven.
I was about to speak, when—"We are even
Now at the point I meant," said Maddalo,
And bade the gondolieri cease to row.

"Look, Julian, on the west, and listen well
If you hear not a deep and heavy bell."
I looked, and saw between us and the sun
A building on an island, such a one
As age to age might add, for uses vile,—
A windowless, deformed, and dreary pile;
And on the top an open tower, where hung
A bell, which in the radiance swayed and swung,-
We could just hear its coarse and iron tongue:
The broad sun sank behind it, and it tolled
In strong and black relief—" What we behold
Shall be the madhouse and its belfry tower,"—
Said Maddalo; " and ever at this hour,
Those who may cross the water hear that bell,
Which calls the maniacs, each one from his cell,
To vespers."

It may be parenthetically observed that one of the few familiar quotations from Shelley's poems occurs in *Julian and Maddalo*:—

Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong:
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.

Byron lent the Shelleys his villa of the Cappuccini near Este, where they spent some weeks in the autumn. Here *Prometheus Unbound* was begun, and the *Lines written among Euganean Hills* were composed; and here Clara became so ill that her parents thought it necessary to rush for medical assistance to Venice. They had forgotten their passport; but Shelley's irresistibleenergy overcame all difficulties, and they entered Venice—only in time, however, for the child to die.

Nearly the whole of the winter was spent in Naples, where Shelley suffered from depression of more than ordinary depth. Mrs. Shelley attributed this gloom to the state of his health; but Medwin tells a strange story, which, if it is not wholly a romance, may better account for the poet's melancholy. He says that so far back as the year 1816, on the night before his departure from London, "a married lady, young, handsome, and of noble connexions," came to him, avowed the passionate love she had conceived for him, and proposed that they should fly together.* He explained to her that his hand and heart had both been given irrevocably to another, and, after the expression of the most exalted sentiments on both sides, they parted. She followed him, however, from place to place; and without intruding herself upon his notice, found some consolation in remaining near him. Now she arrived at Naples; and at Naples she died. The web of Shelley's life was a wide one, and included more destinies than his own. Godwin, as we have reason to believe, attributed the suicide of Fanny Imlay to her hopeless love for Shelley; and the tale of Harriet has been

* Medwin's Life of Shelley, vol. i. 324. His date, ars from the context to be a misprint.

already told. Therefore there is nothing absolutely improbable in Medwin's story, especially when we remember that Hogg half-humorously tells us about Shelley's attraction for women in London. At any rate, the excessive wretchedness of the lyrics written at Naples can hardly be accounted for by the "constant and poignant physical sufferings" of which Mrs. Shelley speaks, since these were habitual to him. She was herself, moreover, under the impression that he was concealing something from her, and we know from her own words in another place that his "fear to wound the feelings of others" often impelled him to keep his deepest sorrows to himself.*

All this while his health was steadily improving. The menace of consumption was removed; and though he suffered from severe attacks of pain in the side, the cause of this persistent malady does not seem to have been ascertained. At Naples he was under treatment for disease of the liver. Afterwards, his symptoms were ascribed to nephritis; and it is certain that his greater or less freedom from uneasiness varied with the quality of the water he drank. He was, for instance, forced to eschew the drinking water of Ravenna, because it aggravated his symptoms; while Florence, for a similar reason, proved un unsuitable residence. The final settlement of the Shelleys at Pisa seems to have been determined by the fact that the water of that place agreed with him. That the spasms which from time to time attacked him were extremely serious, is abundantly proved by the testimony of those who lived with him at this period, and by his own letters. Some relief was obtained by mesmerism, a remedy suggested by Medwin; but the obstinacy of the torment preyed upon his spirits to such an extent, that even during the last months of his life, we find him begging Trelawny to procure him prussic acid as a final and effectual remedy for all the ills that flesh is heir to. It may be added that mental application increased the mischief, for he told Leigh Hunt that the composition of *The Cenci* had cost him a fresh seizure. Yet though his sufferings were indubitably real, the eminent physican, Vaccà, could discover no organic disease; and possibly Trelawny came near the truth when he attributed Shelley's spasms to insufficient and irregular diet, and to a continual over-taxing of his nervous system.

Mrs. Shelley states that the change from England to Italy was in all respects beneficial to her husband. She was inclined to refer the depression from which he occasionally suffered, to his solitary habits; and there are several passages in his own letters which connect his melancholy with solitude. It is obvious that when he found himself in the congenial company of Trelawny, Williams, Medwin, or the Gisbornes, he was simply happy; and nothing could be further from the truth than to paint him as habitually sunk in gloom. On the contrary, we hear quite as much about his high spirits, his "Homeric laughter," his playfulness

* Note on the revolt of Islam.

with children, his readiness to join the amusements of his chosen circle, and his incomparable conversation, as we do about his solitary broodings, and the seasons when pain or bitter memories over-cast his heaven. Byron, who had some right to express a judgment in such a matter, described him as the most companionable m. n under the age of thirty he had ever met with. Shelley rode and practised pistol-shooting with his brother bard, sat up late to talk with him, enjoyed his jokes, and even betted with him on one occsaion marked by questionable taste. All this is quite incompatible with that martrydom to persecution, remorse or physical suffering, with which it pleased some romantic persons to invest the poet. Society of the ordinary kind he hated. The voice of a stranger, or a ring at the house-bell, heard from afar with Shelley's almost inconceivable quickness of preception, was enough to make him leave the house; and one of his prettiest poems is written on his mistaking his wife's mention of the Aziola, a little owl common enough in Tuscany, for an allusion to a tiresome visitor. This dislike for intercourse with commonplace people was the source of some disagreement between him and Mrs. Shelley, and kept him further apart from Byron than he might otherwise have been. In a valuable letter recently published by Mr. Garnet, he writes:—"I detest all society—almost all, at least—and Lord Byron is the nucleus of all that is hateful and tiresome in it." And again, speaking about his wife to Trelawny, he said:—"She can't bear solitude, nor I society—the quick coupled with the dead."

In the year 1818–19 the Shelleys had no friends at all in Italy, except Lord Byron at Venice, and Mr. and Mrs. John Gisborne at Leghorn. Mrs. Gisborne had been a friend of Mary Wollstonecraft and Godwin. She was a woman of much cultivation, devoid of prejudice, and, though less enthusiastic than Shelley liked, quite capable of appreciating the inestimable privilege of his acquaintance. Her husband, to use a now almost obsolete phrase, was a scholar and a gentleman. He shared his wife's enlightened opinions, and remained stanch through good and ill report to his new friends. At Rome and Naples they knew absolutely no one. Shelley's time was therefore passed in study and composition. In the previous summer he had translated the *Symposium* of Plato, and begun an essay on the Ethics of the Greeks, which remains unluckily a fragment. Together with Mary he read much Italian literature, and his observations on the chief Italian poets form a valuable contribution to their criticism. While he admired the splendour and invention of Ariosto, he could not tolerate his moral tone. Tasso struck him as cold and artificial, in spite of his "delicate moral sensibility." Boccaccio he preferred to both; and his remarks on this prose-poet are extremely characteristic. "How much do I admire Boccaccio! What descriptions of nature are those in his little introductions to every new day! It s the morning of life stripped of that mist of familiarity which makes it obscure to us. Boccaccio seems to me to have possessed a deep sense of the fair ideal of human life, considered in its social relations.

His more serious theories of love agree especially with mine. He often expresses things lightly too, which have serious meanings of a very beautiful kind. He is a moral casuist, the opposite of the Christian, stoical, ready-made, and worldly system of morals. Do you remember one little remark or rather maxim of his, which might do some good to the common, narrow-minded conceptions of love,—Bocca baciata, non perde ventura; anzi rinnuova, come fa la luna'?" Dante and Petrarch remained the objects of his lasting admiration, though the cruel Christianity of the *Inferno* seemed to him an ineradicable blot upon the greatest of Italian poems. Of Petrarch's "tender and solemn enthusiasm," he speaks with the sympathy of one who understood the inner mysteries of idealising love.

It will be gathered from the foregoing quotations that Shelley, notwithstanding his profound study of style and his exquisite perception of beauty in form and rhythm, required more than merely artistic excellences in poetry. He judged poems by their content and spirit; and while he plainly expressed his abhorrence of the didactic manner, he held that art must be moralised in order to be truly great. The distinction he drew between Theocritus and the earlier Greek singers in the *Defence of Poetry*, his severe strictures on *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in a letter to Mary (Aug. 20, 1818), and his phrase about Ariosto, "who is entertaining and graceful, and *sometimes* a poet," illustrate the application of critical canons wholly at variance with the "art for art" doctrine.

While studying Italian, he continued faithful to Greek. Plato was often in his hands, and the dramatists formed his almost inseparable companions. How deeply he felt the art of the Homeric poems, may be gathered from the following extract:—"I congratulate you on your conquest of the Iliad. You must have been astonished at the perpetually increasing magnificence of the last seven books. Homer there truly begins to be himself. The battle of the Scamander, the funeral of Patroclus, and the high and solemn close of the whole bloody tale in tenderness and inexpiable sorrow, are wrought in a manner incomparable with anything of the same kind. The Odyssey is sweet, but there is nothing like this." About this time, prompted by Mrs. Gisborne, he began the study of Spanish, and conceived an ardent admiration for Calderon, whose splendid and supernatural fancy tallied with his own. "I am bathing myself in the light and odour of the starry Autos," he writes to Mr. Gisborne in the autumn of 1820. *Faust*, too, was a favourite. "I have been reading over and over again *Faust*, and always with sensations which no other composition excites. It deepens the gloom and augments the rapidity of ideas, and would therefore seem to me an unfit study for any person who is a prey to the reproaches of memory, and the delusions of an imagination not to be restrained." The profound impression made upon him by Margaret's story is expressed in two letters about Retzsch's illustrations:—"The artist makes one envy his happiness that he can sketch such things with calmness, which I only dared look

upon once, and which made my brain swim round only to touch the leaf on the opposite side of which I knew that it was figured."

The fruits of this occupation with Greek, Italian, Spanish, and German were Shelley's translations from Homer and Euripides, from Dante, from Calderon's *Magico Prodigioso*, and from *Faust*, translations which have never been surpassed for beauty of form and complete transfusion of the spirit of one literature into the language of another. On translation, however, he set but little store, asserting that he only undertook it when he "could do absolutely nothing else," and writing earnestly to dissuade Leigh Hunt from devoting time which might be better spent, to work of subordinate importance.* The following version of a Greek epigram on Plato's spirit will illustrate his own method of translation:—

Eagle! why soarest thou above that tomb?
To what sublime and star-y-paven home
Floatest thou?
I am the image of swift Plato's spirit,
Ascending heaven:—Athens does inherit
His corpse below.

Some time in the year 1820–21, he composed the *Defence of Poetry*, stimulated to this undertaking by his friend Peacock's article on poetry, published in the *Literary Miscellany*.† This essay not only sets forth his theory of his own art, but it also contains some of his finest prose writing, of which the following passage, valuable alike for matter and style, may be cited as a specimen:—

The functions of the poetical faculty are two-fold; by one it creates new materials of knowledge, and power, and pleasure; by the other it engenders in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them according to a certain rhythm and order which may be called the beautiful and the good. The cultivation of poetry is never more to be desired than at periods when, from an excess of the selfish and calculating principle, the accumulation of the materials of external life exceed the quantity of the power of assimilating them to the internal laws of human nature. The body has then become too unwieley for that which animates it.

Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought; it is that from which all spring, and that which adorns all; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and the seed, and withholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life. It is the perfect and consummate surface and bloom of all things; it is as the odour and the colour of the rose to the texture of the elements which compose it, as the form and splendour of unfaded beauty to the secrets of anatomy and corruption. What were virtue, love, patriotism, frienship—what were the scenery of this beautiful universe which we inhabit—what were our consolations on this side of the grave—and what were our aspirations beyond it, if

* Letter from Florence, Nov., 1819.
† See Letter to Ollier, Jan. 20, 1820, Shelley Memorials, p. 135.

poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar? Poetry is not like reasoning, a power, to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, "I will compose poetry." The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the orignal conceptions of the poet. I appeal to the greatest poets of the present day, whether it is not an error to assert that the finest passages of poetry are produced by labour and study. The toil and the delay recommended by critics, can be justly interpreted to mean no more than a careful observation of the inspired moments, and an artificial connexion of the spaces between their suggestions by the intermixture of conventional expressions; a necessity only imposed by the limitedness of the poetical faculty itself; for Milton conceived the "Paradise Lost" as a whole before he executed it in portions. We have his own authority also for the muse having "dictated" to him the "unpremeditated song." And let this be an answer to those who would allege the fifty-six various readings of the first line of the "Orlando Furioso." Compositions so produced are to poetry what mosaic is to painting. This instinct and intuition of the poetical faculty is still more observable in the plastic and pictorial arts; a great statue or picture grows under the power of the artist as a child in the mother's womb; and the very mind which directs the hands in formation is incapable of accounting to itself for the origin, the gradations, or the media of the process.

Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. We are aware of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression: so that even in the desire and the regret they leave, there cannot but be pleasure, participating as it does in the nature of its object. It is as it were the interpenetration of a divine nature through our own; but its footsteps are like those of a wind over the sea, which the coming calm erases, and whose traces remain only, as on the wrinkled sand which paves it. These and corresponding conditions of being are experienced principally by those of the most delicate sensibility and the most enlarged imagination; and the state of mind produced by them is at war with every base desire. The enthusiasm of virtue, love, patriotism, and friendship, is essentially linked with such emotions; and whilst they last, self appears as what it is, an atom to a universe. Poets are not only subject to these experiences as spirits of the most refined organization, but they can colour all that they combine with the evanescent hues of this ethereal world; a word, a trait in the representation of a scene or a passion, will touch the enchanted chord, and reanimate, in those who have ever experienced these emotions, the sleeping, the cold, the buried image of the past. Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world; it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life, and veiling them, or in language or in form, sends them forth among mankind, bearing sweet news of

kindred joy to those with whom their sisters abide—abide, because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things. Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man.

In the midst of these æsthetic studies, and while producing his own greatest works, Shelley was not satisfied that his genius ought to be devoted to poetry. "I consider poetry," he wrote to Peacock, January 26th, 1819, "very subordinate to moral and political science, and if I were well, certainly I would aspire to the latter; for I can conceive a great work, embodying the discoveries of all ages, and harmonising the contending creeds by which mankind have been ruled. Far from me is such an attempt, and I shall be content, by exercising my fancy, to amuse myself, and perhaps some others, and cast what weight I can into the scale of that balance which the Giant of Arthegall holds." Whether he was right in the conviction that his genius was no less fitted for metaphysical speculation or for political science than for poetry, is a question that admits of much debate.* We have nothing but fragments whereby to form a definite opinion —the unfinished *Defence of Poetry*, the unfinished *Essay on a Future State*, the unfinished *Essay on Christianity*, the unfinished *Essay on the Punishment of Death*, and the scattered *Speculations on Metaphysics*. None of these compositions justify the belief so confidently expressed by Mrs. Shelley in her Preface to the prose works, that "had not Shelley deserted metaphysics for poetry in his youth, and had he not been lost to us early, so that all his vaster projects were wrecked with him in the waves, he would have presented the world with a complete theory of mind; a theory in which Berkeley, Coleridge, and Kant would have contributed; but more simple, unimpugnable, and entire than the systems of these writers." Their incompleteness rather tends to confirm what she proceeds to state, that the strain of philosophical composition was too great for his susceptible nerves; while her further observation that "thought kindled imagination and awoke sensation, and rendered him dizzy from too great keenness of emotion," seems to indicate that his nature was primarily that of a poet deeply tinctured with philosophical speculation, rather than that of a metaphysician warmed at intervals to an imaginative fervour. Another of her remarks confirms us in this opinion. "He considered these philosophical views of mind and nature to be instinct with the intensest spirit of poetry."† This is the position of the poet rather than the analyst; and, on the whole, we are probably justified in concluding with Mrs. Shelley, that he followed a true instinct when he dedicated himself to poetry, and trained his powers in that direction.‡ To dogmatise upon the topic would be worse than foolish. There was something incalculable, incommensurable, and dæmonic in Shelley's genius; and what he might have achieved, had his life been spared and had his health progressively improved, it is of course impossible to say.

* See Mrs. Shelley's note on the Revolt of Islam, and the whole Preface to the Prose Works.

† Note on Prometheus.

‡ Note on Revolt of Islam.

In the spring of 1819 the Shelleys settled in Rome, where the poet proceeded with the composition of *Prometheus Unbound.* He used to write among the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, not then, as now, despoiled of all their natural beauty, but waving with the Paradise of flowers and shrubs described in his incomparable letter of March the 23rd to Peacock. Rome, however, was not destined to retain them long. On the 7th of June they lost their son William after a short illness. Shelley loved this child intensely, and sat by his bedside for sixty hours without taking rest. He was now practically childless; and his grief found expression in many of his poems, especially in the fragment headed "*Roma, Roma, Roma! non è più com' era prima.*" William was buried in the Protestant cemetery, of which Shelley had written a description to Peacock in the previous December. "The English burying-place is a green slope near the walls, under the pyramidal tomb of Cestius, and is, I think, the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld. To see the sun shining on its bright grass, fresh, when we first visited it, with the autumnal dews, and hear the whispering of the wind among the leaves of the trees which have overgrown the tomb of Cestius, and the soil which is stirring in the sun-warm earth, and to mark the tombs, mostly of women and young people who were buried there, one might, if one were to die, desire the sleep they seem to sleep. Such is the human mind, and so it peoples with its wishes vacancy and oblivion."

Escaping from the scene of so much sorrow, they established themselves at the Villa Valsovano, near Leghorn. Here Shelley began and finished *The Cenci* at the instance of his wife, who rightly thought that he undervalued his own powers as a dramatic poet. The supposed portrait of Beatrice in the Barberini Palace had powerfully affected his imagination, and he fancied that her story would form the fitting subject for a tragedy. It is fortunate for English literature that the real facts of that domestic drama, as recently published by Signor Bertolotti, were then involved in a tissue of romance and legend. During this summer he saw a great deal of the Gisborne family. Mrs. Gisborne's son by a previous marriage, Henry Reveley, was an engineer, and Shelley conceived a project of helping him to build a steamer which should ply between Leghorn and Marseilles. He was to supply the funds, and the pecuniary profit was to be shared by the Gisborne family. The scheme eventually fell through, though Shelley spent a good deal of money upon it; and its only importance is the additional light it throws upon his public and private benevolence. From Leghorn the Shelleys removed in the autumn to Florence, where, on the 12th of November, the present Sir Percy Florence Shelley was born. Here Shelley wrote the last act of *Prometheus Unbound*, which, though the finest portion of that unique drama, seems to have been an afterthought. In the Cascine outside Florence he also composed the *Ode to the West Wind*, the most symmetrically perfect as well as the most impassioned of his minor lyrics. He spent much time in the galleries, made notes upon the principal antique statues, and

formed a plan of systematic art-study. The climate, however, disagreed with him, and in the month of January, 1820, they took up their abode at Pisa.

1819 was the most important year in Shelley's life, so far as literary production is concerned. Besides *The Cenci* and *Prometheus Unbound*, of which it yet remains to speak, this year saw the production of several political and satirical poems—the *Masque of Anarchy*, suggested by the news of the Peterloo massacre, being by far the most important. Shelley attempted the composition of short popular songs which should stir the English people to a sense of what he felt to be their degradation. But he lacked the directness which alone could make such verses forcible, and the passionate apostrophe to the Men of England in his *Masque of Anarchy* marks the highest point of his achievement in this style :—

> Men of England, Heirs of Glory,
> Heroes of unwritten story,
> Nurslings of one mighty mother,
> Hopes of her, and one another!
>
> Rise, like lions after slumber,
> In unvanquishable number,
> Shake your chains to earth like dew,
> Which in sleep had fall'n on you.
> Ye are many, they are few.

Peter Bell the Third, written in this year, and *Swell-foot the Tyrant*, composed in the following autumn, are remarkable as showing with what keen interest Shelley watched public affairs in England from his exile home; but, for my own part, I cannot agree with those critics who esteem their humour at a high rate. The political poems may profitably be compared with his contemporary correspondence; with the letters, for instance, to Leigh Hunt, November 23rd, 1819; and to Mr. John Gisborne, April 10th, 1822; and with an undated fragment published by Mr. Garnett in the *Relics of Shelley*, page 84. No student of English political history before the Reform Bill can regard his apprehensions of a great catastrophe as ill-founded. His insight into the real danger to the nation was as penetrating as his suggestion of a remedy was moderate. Those who are accustomed to think of the poet as a visionary enthusiast, will rub their eyes when they read the sober lines in which he warns his friend to be cautious about the security offered by the English Funds. Another letter, dated Lerici, June 29, 1822, illustrates the same practical temper of mind, the same logical application of political principles to questions of public economy.

That *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci* should have been composed in one and the same year must be reckoned among the greatest wonders of literature, not only because of their sublime greatness, but also because of their essential difference. Æschylus,

it is well known, had written a sequel to his *Prometheus Bound*, in which he showed the final reconciliation between Zeus, the oppressor, and Prometheus, the champion, of humanity. What that reconciliation was, we do not know, because the play is lost, and the fragments are too brief for supporting any probable hypothesis. But Shelley repudiated the notion of compromise. He could not conceive of the Titan "unsaying his high language, and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary." He, therefore, approached the theme of liberation from a wholly different point of view. Prometheus in his drama is the humane vindicator of love, justice, and liberty, as opposed to Jove, the tyrannical oppressor, and creator of all evil by his selfish rule. Prometheus is the mind of man idealised, the spirit of our race, as Shelley thought it made to be. Jove is the incarnation of all that thwarts its free development. Thus counterposed, the two chief actors represent the fundamental antitheses of good and evil, liberty and despotism, love and hate. They give the form of personality to Shelley's Ormuzd-Ahriman dualism already expressed in the first canto of *Laon and Cythna;* but, instead of being represented on the theatre of human life, the strife is now removed into the reign of abstractions, vivified by mythopoetry. Prometheus resists Jove to the uttermost, endures all torments, physical and moral, that the tyrant plagues him with, secure in his own strength, and calmly expectant of an hour which shall hurl Jove from heaven, and leave the spirit of good triumphant. That hour arrives; Jove disappears; the burdens of the world and men are suddenly removed; a new age of peace and freedom and illimitable energy begins; the whole universe partakes in the emancipation; the spirit of the earth no longer groans in pain, but sings alternate love-songs with his sister orb, the moon; Prometheus is re-united in indissoluble bonds to his old love, Asia. Asia, withdrawn from sight during the first act, but spoken of as waiting in her exile for the fated hour, is the true mate of the human spirit. She is the fairest daughter of Earth and Ocean. Like Aphrodite, she rises in the Ægean near the land called by her name; and in the time of tribulation she dwells in a far Indian vale. She is the Idea of Beauty incarnate, the shadow of the Light of Life which sustains the world and enkindles it with love, the reality of Alastor's vision, the breathing image of the awful loveliness apostrophised in the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, the reflex of the splendour of which Adonais was a part. At the moment of her triumph she grows so beautiful that Ione her sister cannot see her, only feels her influence. The essential thought of Shelley's creed was that the universe is penetrated, vitalised, made real by a spirit, which he sometimes called the spirit of Nature, but which is always conceived as more than Life, as that which gives its actuality to Life, and lastly as Love and Beauty. To adore this spirit, to clasp it with affection, and to blend with it, is, he thought, the true object of man. Therefore, the final union of Prometheus with Asia is the consummation of human destinies.

Love was the only law Shelley recognised. Unterrified by the grim realities of pain and crime revealed in nature and society, he held fast to the belief that, if we could but pierce to the core of things, if we could but be what we might be, the world and man would both attain to their perfection in eternal love. What resolution through some transcendental harmony was expected by Shelley for the palpable discords in the structure of the universe, we hardly know. He did not give his philosophy systematic form : and his new science of love remains a luminous poetic vision—nowhere more brilliantly set forth than in the "sevenfold hallelujahs and harping symphonies" of this, the final triumph of his lyrical poetry.

In *Prometheus*, Shelley conceived a colossal work of art, and sketched out the main figures on a scale of surpassing magnificence. While painting in these figures, he seems to reduce their proportions too much to the level of earthly life. He quits his god-creating, heaven compelling-throne of mythopœic inspiration, and descends to a love-story of Asia and Prometheus. In other words, he does not sustain the visionary and primeval dignity of these incarnated abstractions ; nor, on the other hand, has he so elaborated their characters in detail as to give them the substantiality of persons. There is therefore something vague and hollow in both figures. Yet in the subordinate passages of the poem, the true mythopœic faculty—the faculty of finding concrete forms for thought, and of investing emotion with personality—shines forth with extraordinary force and clearness. We feel ourselves in the grasp of a primitive myth-maker while we read the description of Oceanus, and the raptures of the Earth and Moon.

A genuine liking for *Prometheus Unbound* may be reckoned the touch-stone of a man's capacity for understanding lyric poetry. The world in which the action is supposed to move, rings with spirit voices ; and what these spirits sing, is melody more purged of mortal dross than any other poet's ear has caught, while listening to his own heart's song, or to the rhythms of the world. There are hymns in *Prometheus* which seem to realise the miracle of making words, detached from meaning, the substance of a new ethereal music; and yet, although their verbal harmony is such, they are never devoid of definite significance for those who understand. Shelley scorned the æsthetics of a school which finds "sense swooning into nonsense" admirable. And if a critic is so dull as to ask what "Life of Life ! thy lips enkindle" means, or to whom it is addressed, none can help him any more than one can help a man whose sense of hearing is too gross for the tenuity of a bat's cry. A voice in the air thus sings the hymn of Asia at the moment of her apotheosis :—

> Life of Life ! thy lips enkindle
> With their love the breath between them ;
> And thy smiles before they dwindle
> Make the cold air fire ; then screen them
> In those looks where whoso gazes
> Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
  Through the vest which seems to hide them,
As the radiant lines of morning
  Through the clouds, ere they divide them;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others; none beholds thee.
  But thy voice sounds low and tender,
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
  From the sight, that liquid splendour,
And all feel, yet see thee never
As I feel now, lost for ever!

Lamp of Earth where'er thou movest
  Its dim shades are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
  Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

It has been said that Shelley, as a landscape painter, is decidedly Turneresque; and there is much in *Prometheus Unbound* to justify this opinion. The scale of colour is light and aerial, and the darker shadows are omitted. An excess of luminousness seems to be continually radiated from the objects at which he looks; and in this radiation of many-coloured lights, the outline itself apt to be a little misty. Shelley, moreover, pierced through things to their spiritual essence. The actual world was less for him than that which lies within it and beyond it. "I seek" he says himself, "in what I see, the manifestation of something beyond the present and tangible object." For him, as for the poet described by one of the spirit voices in *Prometheus*, the bees in the ivy-bloom are scarcely heeded; they become in his mind,—

Forms more real than living man.
Nurslings of immortality.

And yet who could have brought the bees, the lake, the sun, the bloom, more perfectly before us than that picture does?* What vignette is more exquisitely coloured and finished than the little study of a pair of halcyons in the third act? † Blake is perhaps the only artist who could have illustrated this drama. He might have shadowed forth the choirs of spirits, the trailing voices and their thrilling songs, phantasmal Demogorgon, and the charioted Hour. Prometheus, too, with his "flowing limbs," has just Blake's fault of impersonation—the touch of unreality in that painter's Adam.

Passing to the *The Cenci*, we change at once the moral and artistic atmosphere. The lyrical element, except for one most lovely dirge, is absent. Image and description are alike sternly ex-

* Forman, vol. ii. p. 181. † Forman, vol. ii. p. 231

cluded. Instead of soaring to the empyrean, our feet are firmly planted on the earth. In exchange for radiant visions of future perfection, we are brought into the sphere of dreadful passions—all the agony, endurance, and half-maddened action, of which luckless human innocence is capable. To tell the legend of Beatrice Cenci here, is hardly needed. Her father, a monster of vice and cruelty, was bent upon breaking her spirit by imprisonment, torture, and nameless outrage. At last her patience ended; and finding no redress in human justice, no champion of her helplessness in living man, she wrought his death. For this she died upon the scaffold, together with her step-mother and her brothers, who had aided in the execution of the murder. The interest of *The Cenci*, and it is overwhelmingly great, centres in Beatrice and her father; from these two chief actors in the drama, all the other characters fall away into greater or less degrees of unsubstantiality. Perhaps Shelley intended this—as the maker of a bas-relief contrives two or three planes of figures for the presentation of his ruling group. Yet there appears to my mind a defect of accomplishment, rather than a deliberate intention, in the delineation of Orsino. He seems meant to be the wily, crafty, Machiavellian reptile, whose calculating wickedness should form a contrast to the dæmonic, reckless, almost maniacal fiendishness of old Francesco Cenci. But this conception of him wavers; his love for Beatrice is too delicately tinted, and he is suffered to break down with an infirmity of conscience alien to such a nature. On the other hand the uneasy vacillations of Giacomo, and the irresolution, born of feminine weakness and want of fibre, in Lucrezia, serve to throw the firm will of Beatrice into prominent relief; while her innocence, sustained through extraordinary suffering in circumstances of exceptional horror—the innocence of a noble nature thrust by no act of its own but by its wrongs beyond the pale of ordinary womankind—is contrasted with the merely childish guiltlessness of Bernardo. Beatrice rises to her full height in the fifth act, dilates and grows with the approach of danger, and fills the whole scene with her spirit on the point of death. Her sublime confidence in the justice and essential rightness of her action, the glance of self-assured purity with which she annihilates the cut-throat brought to testify against her, her song in prison, and her tender solicitude for the frailer Lucrezia, are used with wonderful dramatic skill for the fulfilment of a feminine ideal at once delicate and powerful. Once and once only does she yield to ordinary weakness; it is when the thought crosses her mind that she may meet her father in the other world, as once he came to her on earth.

Shelley dedicated *The Cenci* to Leigh Hunt, saying that he had striven in this tragedy to cast aside the subjective manner of his earlier work, and to produce something at once more popular and more concrete, more sober in style, and with a firmer grasp on the realities of life. He was very desirous of getting it acted, and wrote to Peacock requesting him to offer it at Covent Garden. Miss O'Neil, he thought, would play the part of Beatrice admirably,

The manager, however, did not take this view; averring that the subject rendered it incapable of being even submitted to an actress like Miss O'Neil. Shelley's self-criticism is always so valuable, that it may be well here to collect what he said about the two great dramas of 1819. Concerning *The Cenci* he wrote to Peacock:—"It is written without any of the peculiar feelings and opinions which characterise my other compositions; I having attended simply to the impartial development of such characters as it is probable the persons represented really were, together with the greatest degree of popular effect to be produced by such a development." "*Cenci* is written for the multitude, and ought to sell well." "I believe it singularly fitted for the stage." "*The Cenci* is a work of art; it is not coloured by my feelings, nor obscured by my metaphysics. I don't think much of it. It gave me less trouble than anything I have written of the same length." *Prometheus*, on the other hand, he tells Ollier, "is my favorite poem; I charge you, therefore, specially to pet him and feed him with fine ink and good paper"—which was duly done. Again:—"For *Prometheus* I expect and desire no great sale; *Prometheus* was never intended for more than five or six persons; it is in my judgment of a higher character than anything I have yet attempted, and is perhaps less an imitation of anything that has gone before; it is original, and cost me severe mental labour." Shelley was right in judging that *The Cenci* would be comparatively popular: this was proved by the fact that it went through two editions in his lifetime. The value he set upon *Prometheus* as the higher work, will hardly be disputed. Unique in the history of literature, and displaying the specific qualities of its author at their height, the world could less easily afford to lose this drama than *The Cenci*, even though that be the greatest tragedy composed in English since the death of Shakespere. For reasons which will be appreciated by lovers of dramatic poetry, I refrain from detaching portions of these two plays. Those who desire to make themselves acquainted with the author's genius, must devote long and patient study to the originals in their entirety.

Prometheus Unbound, like the majority of Shelley's works, fell still-born from the press. It furnished punsters with a joke, however, which went the round of several papers; this poem, they cried, is well named, for who would bind it? Of criticism that deserves the name, Shelley got absolutely nothing in his lifetime. The stupid but venomous reviews which gave him occasional pain, but which he mostly laughed at, need not now be mentioned. It is not much to any purpose to abuse the authors of mere rubbish. The real lesson to be learned from such of them as may possibly have been sincere,as well as from the failure of his contemporaries to appreciate his genius—the sneers of Moore, the stupidity of Campbell, the ignorance of Wordsworth, the priggishness of Southey, or the condescending tone of Keats—is that nothing is more difficult than for lesser men or equals to pay just homage to the greatest in their lifetime. Those who may be interested in studying Shelley's atti-

tude towards his critics, should read a letter addressed to Ollier from Florence, October 15, 1819, soon after he had seen the vile attack upon him in the *Quarterly*, comparing this with the fragments of an expostulatory letter to the Editor, and the preface to *Adonais*.* It is clear that, though he bore scurrilous abuse with patience, he was prepared if needful to give blow for blow. On the 11th of June, 1821, he wrote to Ollier:—"As yet I have laughed; but woe to those scoundrels if they should once make me lose my temper!" The stanzas on the *Quarterly in Adonais*, and the invective against Lord Eldon, show what Shelley could have done if he had chosen to castigate the curs. Meanwhile the critics achieved what they intended. Shelley, as Trelawny emphatically tells us, was universally shunned, coldly treated by Byron's friends at Pisa, and regarded as a monster by such of the English in Italy as had not made his personal acquaintance. On one occasion he is even said to have been knocked down in a post-office by some big bully, who escaped before he could obtain his name and address; but this is one of the stories rendered doubtful by lack of precise details.

* Shelley Memorials, p. 121. Garnett's Relics of Shelley, pp. 49, 180. Collected Letters, p. 147, in Moxon's Edition of Works in one vol. 1840.

CHAPTER VI.

RESIDENCE AT PISA.

On the 26th of January, 1820, the Shelleys established themselves at Pisa. From this date forward to the 7th of July, 1822, Shelley's life divides itself into two periods of unequal length; the first spent at Pisa, the baths of San Giuliano, and Leghorn; the second at Lerici, on the Bay of Spezia. Without entering into minute particulars of dates or recording minor changes of residence it is possible to treat of the first and longer period in general. The house he inhabited at Pisa was on the south side of the Arno. After a few months he became the neighbour of Lord Byron, who engaged the Palazzo Lanfranchi in order to be near him; and here many English and Italian friends gathered round them. Among these must be mentioned in the first place Captain Medwin, whose recollections of the Pisan residence are of considerable value, and next Captain Trelawny, who has left a record of Shelley's last days only equalled in vividness by Hogg's account of the Oxford period, and marked by signs of more unmistakable accuracy. Not less important members of this private circle were Mr. and Mrs. Edward Elleker Williams, with whom Shelley and his wife lived on terms of the closest friendship. Among Italians, the physician Vaccà, the improvisatore Sgricci, and Rosini, the author of *La Monaca di Monza*, have to be recorded. It will be seen from this enumeration that Shelley was no longer solitary; and indeed it would appear that now, upon the eve of his accidental death, he had begun to enjoy an immunity from many of his previous sufferings. Life expanded before him: his letters show that he was concentrating his powers and preparing for a fresh flight; and the months, though ever productive of poetic masterpieces, promised a still more magnificent birth in the future.

In the summer and autumn of 1820, Shelley produced some of his most genial poems: the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*, which might be mentioned as a pendent to *Julian and Maddalo* for its treatment of familiar things; the *Ode to a Skylark*, that most popular of all his lyrics; the *Witch of Atlas*, unrivalled as an Ariel-flight of fairy fancy? and the *Ode to Naples*, which, together with the *Ode to Liberty*, added a new lyric form to English literature. In the winter he wrote the *Sensitive Plant*, prompted thereto, we

are told, by the flowers which crowded Mrs. Shelley's drawing-room, and exhaled their sweetness to the temperate Italian sunlight. Whether we consider the number of these poems or their diverse character, ranging from verse separated by an exquisitely subtle line from simple prose to the most impassioned eloquence and the most ethereal imagination, we shall be equally astonished. Every chord of the poet's lyre is touched, from the deep bass string that echoes the diurnal speech of such a man as Shelley was to the fine vibrations of a treble merging its rarity of tone in accents super-sensible to ordinary ears. One passage from the *Letter to Maria Gisborne* may here be quoted, not for its poetry, but for the light it casts upon the circle of his English friends.

You are now
In London, that great sea, whose ebb and flow
At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more,
Yet in its depth what treasures! You will see
That which was Godwin,—greater none than he
Though fallen—and fallen on evil times—to stand
Among the spirits of our age and land,
Before the dread tribunal of *To come*
The foremost, while Rebuke cowers pale and dumb.
You will see Coleridge—he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre and the pure
Intense irradition of a mind,
Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair—
A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
A hooded eagle among blinking owls.
You will see Hunt; one of those happy souls
Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is—a tomb;
Who is, what others seem. His room no doubt
Is still adorned by many a cast from Shout,
With graceful flowers tastefully placed about,
And coronals of bay from ribbons hung;
And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung;
The gifts of the most learn'd among some dozens
Of female friends, sisters-in-law, and cousins.
And there is he with his eternal puns,
Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns
Thundering for money at a poet's door;
Alas! it is no use to say, "I'm poor!"—
Or oft in graver mood, when he will look
Things wiser than were ever read in book,
Except in Shakespere's wisest tenderness.
You will see Hogg; and I cannot express
His virtues, though I know that they are great,
Because he locks, then barricades the gate
Within which they inhabit. Of his wit
And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
He is a pearl within an oyster-shell,

One of the richest of the deep. And there
Is English Peacock, with his mountain fair,
Turn'd into a Flamingo, that shy bird
That gleams in the Indian air. Have you not heard
When a man marries, dies, or turns Hindoo,
His best friends hear no more of him. But you
Will see him, and will like him too, I hope,
With the milk white Snowdonian antelope
Match'd with this camelopard. His fine wit
Makes such a wound, the knife is lost in it;
A strain too learnèd for a shallow age,
Too wise for selfish bigots; let his page
Which charms the chosen spirits of the time,
Fold itself up for the serener clime
Of years to come, and find its recompense
In that just expectation. Wit and sense,
Virtue and human knowledge, all that might
Make this dull world a business of delight,
Are all combined in Horace Smith. And these,
With some exceptions, which I need not tease
Your patience by descanting on, are all
You and I know in London.

Captain Medwin, who came late in the autumn of 1820, at his cousin's invitation, to stay with the Shelleys, has recorded many interesting details of their Pisan life, as well as valuable notes of Shelley's conversation. "It was nearly seven years since we had parted, but I should have immediately recognised him in a crowd. His figure was emaciated, and somewhat bent, owing to near-sightedness, and his being forced to lean over his books, with his eyes almost touching them; his hair, still profuse, and curling naturally, was partially interspersed with grey; but his appearance was youthful. There was also a freshness and purity in his complexion that he never lost." Not long after his arrival, Medwin suffered from a severe and tedious illness. "Shelley tended me like a brother. He applied my leeches, administered my medicines, and during six weeks that I was confined to my room, was assiduous and unintermitting in his affectionate care of me." The poet's solitude and melancholy at this time impressed his cousin very painfully. Though he was producing a long series of imperishable poems, he did not take much interest in his work. "I am disgusted with writing," he once said, "and were it not for an irresistible impulse, that predominates my better reason, should discontinue so doing." The brutal treatment he had lately received from the *Quarterly Review*, the calumnies which pursued him, and the coldness of all but a very few friends, checked his enthusiasm for composition. Of this there is abundant proof in his correspondence. In a letter to Leigh Hunt, dated Jan. 25, 1822, he says: "My faculties are shaken to atoms and torpid. I can write nothing; and if *Adonais* had no success, and excited no interest, what incentive can I have to write?" Again: "I write little now. It is impossible to compose except under the strong excitement of an assurance of finding sym-

pathy in what you write." Lord Byron's company proved now, as before, a check rather than an incentive to production: "I do not write; I have lived too long near Lord Byron, and the sun has extinguished the glow-worm; for I cannot hope, with St. John, that *the light came into the world and the world knew it not.*" "I despair of rivalling Lord Byron, as well I may, and there is no other with whom it is worth contending." To Ollier, in 1820, he wrote: "I doubt whether I shall write more. I could be content either with the hell or the paradise of poetry; but the torments of its purgatory vex me, without exciting my powers sufficiently to put an end to the vexation." It was not that his spirit was cowed by the Reviews, or that he mistook the sort of audience he had to address. He more than once acknowledged that, while Byron wrote for the many, his poems were intended for the understanding few. Yet the σύνετοί, as he called them, gave him but scanty encouragement. The cold phrases of kindly Horace Smith show that he had not comprehended *Prometheus Unbound;* and Shelley whimsically complains that even intelligent and sympathetic critics confounded the ideal passion described in *Epipsychidion* with the love affairs of "a servant-girl and her sweetheart." This almost incomprehensible obtuseness on the part of men who ought to have known better, combined with the coarse abuse of vulgar scribblers, was enough to make a man so sincerely modest as Shelley doubt his powers, or shrink from the severe labour of developing them.* "The decision of the cause," he wrote to Mr. Gisborne, "whether or no *I* am a poet, is removed from the present time to the hour when our posterity shall assemble; but the court is a very severe one, and I fear that the verdict will be, guilty—death." Deep down in his own heart he had, however, less doubt: "This I know," he said to Medwin, "that whether in prosing or in versing, there is something in my writings that shall live for ever." And again he writes to Hunt: "I am full of thoughts and plans, and should do something, if the feeble and irritable frame which encloses it was willing to obey the spirit. I fancy that then I should do great things." It seems almost certain that the incompleteness of many longer works designed in the Italian period, the abandonment of the tragedy on Tasso's story, the unfinished state of *Charles I.*, and the failure to execute the cherished plan of a drama suggested by the Book of Job, were due to the depressing effects of ill-health and external discouragement. Poetry with Shelley was no light matter. He composed under the pressure of intense excitement, and he elaborated his first draughts with minute care and severe self-criticism.

These words must not be taken as implying that he followed the Virgilian precedent of polishing and reducing the volume of his verses by an anxious exercise of calm reflection, or that he observed the Horatian maxim of deferring their publication till the ninth year. The contrary was notoriously the case with him. Yet

* See Medwin, vol. ii. p. 172. for Selley's comment on the difficulty of the poet's art.

it is none the less proved by the state of his manuscripts that his compositions, even as we now possess them, were no mere improvisations. The passage already quoted from his *Defence of Poetry* shows the high ideal he had conceived of the poet's duty toward his art; and it may be confidently asserted that his whole literary career was one long struggle to emerge from the incoherence of his earlier efforts, into the clearness of expression and precision of form that are the index of mastery over style. At the same time it was inconsistent with his most firmly rooted æsthetic principles to attempt composition except under an impulse approaching to inspiration. To imperil his life by the fiery taxing of all his faculties, moral, intellectual, and physical, and to undergo the discipline exacted by his own fastidious taste, with no other object in view than the frigid compliments of a few friends, was more than even Shelley's enthusiasm could endure. He, therefore, at this period required the powerful stimulus of some highly exciting cause from without to determine his activity.

Such external stimulus came to Shelley from three quarters early in the year 1821. Among his Italian acquaintances at Pisa was a clever but disreputable Professor, of whom Medwin draws a very piquant portrait. This man one day related the sad story of a beautiful and noble lady, the Contessina Emilia Viviani, who had been confined by her father in a dismal convent of the suburbs, to await her marriage with a distasteful husband. Shelley, fired as ever by a tale of tryanny, was eager to visit the fair captive. The Professor accompanied him and Medwin to the convent-parlour, where they found her more lovely than even the most glowing descriptions had led them to expect. Nor was she only beautiful. Shelley soon discovered that she had "cultivated her mind beyond what I have ever met with in Italian women;" and a rhapsody composed by her upon the subject of Uranian Love —Il Vero Amore—justifies the belief that she possessed an intellect of more than ordinary elevation. He took Mrs. Shelley to see her, and both did all they could to make her convent-prison less irksome, by frequent visits, by letters, and by presents of flowers and books. It was not long before Shelley's sympathy for this unfortunate lady took the form of love, which, however spiritual and Platonic, was not the less passionate. The result was the composition of *Epipsychidion*, the most unintelligible of all his poems to those who have not assimilated the spirit of Plato's *Symposium* and Dante's *Vita Nuova*. In it he apostrophises Emilia Viviani as the incarnation of ideal beauty, the universal loveliness made visible in mortal flesh :—

> Seraph of Heaven! too gentle to be human,
> Veiling beneath that radiant form of woman
> All that is insupportable in thee
> Of light, and love, and immortality!

He tells her that he loves her, and describes the troubles and deceptions of his earlier manhood, under allegories veiled in de-

liberate obscurity. The Pandemic and the Uranian Aphrodite have striven for his soul; for though in youth he dedicated himself to the service of ideal beauty, and seemed to find it under many earthly shapes, yet has he ever been deluded. At last Emily appears, and in her he recognises the truth of the vision veiled from him so many years. She and Mary shall henceforth, like sun and moon, rule the world of love within him. Then he calls on her to fly. They three will escape and live together, far away from men, in an Ægean island. The description of this visionary isle, and of the life to be led there by the fugitives from a dull and undiscerning world, is the most beautiful that has been written this century in the rhymed heroic metre.

It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise;
And, for the harbours are not safe and good,
This land would have remained a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,
Simple and spirited, innocent and bold.
The blue Ægean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam
Kissing the sifted sands and caverns hoar;
And all the winds wandering along the shore,
Undulate with the undulating tide.
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide;
And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,
Or serene morning air. And far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer,
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year,)
Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls,
Illumining, with sound that never fails
Accompany the noonday nightingales;
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs.
The light clear element which the isle wears
Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,
And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep;
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep,
And dart their arrowy odour through the brain,
Till you might faint with that delicious pain.
And every motion, odour, beam, and tone,
With that deep music is in unison:
Which is a soul within a soul—they seem
Like echoes of an antenatal dream.
It is an isle 'twixt heaven, air, earth, and sea
Cradled, and hung in clear tranquillity;
Bright as that wandering Eden, Lucifer,
Washed by the soft blue oceans of young air.
It is a favoured place. Famine or Blight,
Pestilence, War, and Earthquake, never light

Upon its mountain-peaks; blind vultures, they
Sail onward far upon their fatal way.
The wingèd storms, chanting their thunder-psalm
To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
From which its fields and woods ever renew
Their green and golden immortality.
And from the sea there rise, and from the sky
There fall, clear exhalations, soft and bright,
Veil after veil, each hiding some delight,
Which sun or moon or zephyr draws aside,
Till the isle's beauty, like a naked bride
Glowing at once with love and loveliness,
Blushes and trembles at its own excess:
Yet, like a buried lamp, a soul no less
Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,
An atom of the Eternal, whose own smile
Unfolds itself, and may be felt not seen
O'er the grey rocks, blue waves, and forests green,
Filling their bare and void interstices.

Shelley did not publish *Epipsychidion* with his own name. He gave it to the world as the composition of a man who had "died at Florence, as he was preparing for a voyage to one of the Sporades," and he requested Ollier not to circulate it, except among a few intelligent readers. It may almost be said to have been never published, in such profound silence did it issue from the press. Very shortly after its appearance he described it to Leigh Hunt as "a portion of me already dead," and added this significant allusion to its subject matter:—"Some of us have in a prior existence been in love with an Antigone, and that makes us find no full content in any mortal tie." In the letter of June 18, 1822, again he says:—"The *Epipsychidion* I cannot look at; the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno; and poor Ixion starts from the Centaur that was the offspring of his own embrace. If you are curious, however, to hear what I am and have been, it will tell you something thereof. It is an idealized history of my life and feelings. I think one is always in love with something or other; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal." This paragraph contains the essence of a just criticism. Brilliant as the poem is, we cannot read it with unwavering belief either in the author's sincerity at the time he wrote it, or in the permanence of the emotion it describes. The exordium has a fatal note of rhetorical exaggeration, not because the kind of passion is impossible, but because Shelley does not convince us that in this instance he had really been its subject. His own critique, following so close upon the publication of *Epipsychidion*, confirms the impression made by it, and justifies the conclusion that he had utilised his feeling for Emilia to express a favourite doctrine in impassioned verse.

To students of Shelley's inner life *Epipsychidion* will always

have high value, independently of its beauty of style, as containing his doctrine of love. It is the full expression of the esoteric principle presented to us in *Alastor*, the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, and *Prince Athanase*. But the words just quoted, which may be compared with Mrs. Shelley's note to *Prince Athanase*, authorise our pointing out what he himself recognised as the detect of his theory. Instead of remaining true to the conception of Beauty expressed in the *Hymn*, Shelley "sought through the world the One whom he may love." Thus, while his doctrine in *Epipsychidion* seems Platonic, it will not square with the *Symposium*. Plato treats the love of a beautiful person as a mere initiation into divine mysteries, the first step in the ladder that ascends to heaven. When a man has formed a just conception to the universal beauty, he looks back with a smile upon those who find their soul's sphere in the love of some mere mortal object. Tested by this standard, Shelley's identification of Intellectual Beauty with so many daughters of earth, and his worshipping love of Emilia, is a spurious Platonism. Plato would have said that to seek the Idea of Beauty in Emilia Viviani was a retrogressive step. All that she could do, would be to quicken the soul's sense of beauty, to stir it from its lethargy, and to make it divine the eternal reality of beauty in the supersensual world of thought. This Shelley had already acknowledged in the *Hymn;* and this he emphasises in these words :—"The error consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal."

The fragments and cancelled passages published in Forman's edition do not throw much light upon *Epipsychidion*. The longest, entitled *To his Genius* by its first editor, Mr. Garnett, reads like the induction to a poem conceived and written in a different key, and at a lower level of inspiration. It has, however, this extraordinary interest, that it deals with a love which is both love and friendship, above sex, spiritual, unintelligible to the world at large. Thus the fragment enables the student better to realise the kind of worship so passionately expressed in *Epipsychidion*.

The news of Keats's death at Rome on the 27th of December, 1820, and the erroneous belief that it had been accelerated, if not caused, by a contemptible review of *Endymion* in the *Quarterly*, stirred Shelley to the composition of *Adonais*. He had it printed at Pisa, and sent copies to Ollier for circulation in London. This poem was a favourite with its author, who hoped not only that it might find acceptance with the public, but also that it would confer lustre upon the memory of a poet whom he sincerely admired. No criticisms upon Shelley's works are half so good as his own. It is, therefore, interesting to collect the passages in which he speaks of an elegy only equalled in our language by *Lycidas*, and in the point of passionate eloquence even superior to Milton's youthful lament for his friend. "The *Adonais*, in spite of its mysticism," he writes to Ollier, "is the least imperfect of my compositions." "I confess I should be surprised if that poem were born to an immortality of oblivion." "It is a highly wrought *piece of art*, and perhaps better,

in point of composition, than anything I have written." "It is absurd in any review to criticise *Adonais*, and still more to pretend that the verses are bad." "I know what to think of *Adonais*, but what to think of those who confound it with the many bad poems of the day, I know not." Again, alluding to the stanzas hurled against the infamous *Quarterly* reviewer, he says :—"I have dipped my pen in consuming fire for his destroyers ; otherwise the style is calm and solemn."

With these estimates the reader of to-day will cordially agree. Although *Adonais* is not so utterly beyond the scope of other poets as *Prometheus* or *Epipsychidion*, it presents Shelley's qualities in a form of even and sustained beauty, brought within the sphere of the dullest apprehensions. Shelley, we may notice, dwells upon the *art* of the poem; and this, perhaps, is what at first sight will strike the student most. He chose as a foundation for his work those laments of Bion for Adonis, and of Moschus for Bion, which are the most pathetic products of Greek idyllic peotry; and the transmutation of their material into the substance of highly spiritualized modern thought, reveals the potency of a Prospero's wand. It is a metamorphosis whereby the art of excellent but positive poets has been translated into the sphere of metaphysical imagination. Urania takes the place of Aphrodite; the thoughts and fancies and desires of the dead singer are substituted for Bion's cupids; and instead of mountain shepherds, the living bards of England are summoned to lament around the poet's bier. Yet it is only when Shelley frees himself from the influence of his models, that he soars aloft on mighty wing. This point, too, is the point of transition from death, sorrow, and the past to immortality, joy, and the rapture of the things that cannot pass away. The first and second portions of the poem are, at the same time, thoroughly concordant, and the passage from the one to the other is natural. Two quotations from *Adonais* will suffice to show the power and sweetness of its verse.

The first is a description of Shelley himself following Byron and Moore—the "Pilgrim of Eternity," and Ierne's "sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong"—to the couch whe·e Keats lies dead. There is both pathos and unconscious irony in his making these two poets the chief mourners, when we remember what Byron wrote about Keats in *Don Juan*, and what Moore afterwards recorded of Shelley; and when we think, moreover, how far both Keats and Shelley have outsoared Moore, and disputed with Byron his supreme place in the heaven of poetry.

> Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
> A phantom among men, companionless
> As the last cloud of an expiring storm,
> Whose thunder is its knell. He, as I guess,
> Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness.
> Actæon-like, and now he fled astray
> With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
> And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
> Pursued like raging hounds their father and their prey.

A pard-like Spirit beautiful and swift—
A love in desolation masked—a Power
Girt round with weakness; it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour;
Is it a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow;—even whilst we speak
Is it not broken? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

His head was bound with pansies over-blown,
And faded violets, white and pied and blue;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noon-day dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it. Of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart;
A herd-abandoned deer, struck by the hunter's dart.

The second passage is the peroration of the poem. Nowhere has Shelley expressed his philosophy of man's relation to the universe with more sublimity and with a more imperial command of language than in these stanzas. If it were possible to identify that philosophy with any recognised system of thought, it might be called pantheism. But it is difficult to affix a name, stereotyped by the usage of the schools, to the aerial spiritualism of its ardent and impassioned poet's creed.

The movement of the long melodious sorrow-song has just been interrupted by three stanzas, in which Shelley lashes the reviewer of Keats. He now bursts forth afresh into the music of consolation:—

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep!
He hath awakened from the dream of life.
'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings. *We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn,

Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to mourn!
Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the One Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

But the absorption of the human soul into primeval nature-forces, the blending of the principle of thought with the universal spirit of beauty, is not enough to satisfy man's yearning after immortality. Therefore in the next three stanzas the indestructibility of the personal self is presented to us, as the soul of Adonais passes into the company of the illustrious dead who, like him, were untimely slain:—

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not:
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there,
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell, and as he lived and loved,
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved:
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
"Thou art become as one of us," they cry;
"It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of song.
Assume th ywingèd throne, thou Vesper of our throng!"

From the more universal and philosophical aspects of his theme, the poet once more turns to the special subject that had stirred him. Adonais lies dead: and those who mourn him must seek his grave. He has escaped: to follow him is to die; and where should we learn to dote on death unterrified, if not in Rome? In this way the description of Keats's resting-place beneath the pyramid of Cestius, which was also destined to be Shelley's own, is introduced:—

Who mourns for Adonais? oh come forth,
Fond wretch! and show thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Satiate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light, let it make thee sin
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
Oh, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend,—they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise
And flowering weeds and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness,
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access,
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass in spread;

And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,

A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind.
Break if not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

Yet again the thought of Death as the deliverer, the revealer, and the mystagogue, through whom the soul of man is reunited to the spirit of the universe, returns; and on this solemn note the poem closes. The symphony of exultation which had greeted the passage of Adonais into the eternal world, is here subdued to a graver key, as befits the mood of one whom mystery and mourning still oppress on earth. Yet even in the somewhat less than jubilant conclusion we feel that highest of Shelley's qualities—the liberation of incalculable energies, the emancipation and expansion of force within the soul, victorious over circumstance, exhilarated and elevated by contact with such hopes as make a feebler spirit tremble:

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is past from the revolving year,
And man and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles, the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither!
No more let life divide what Death can join together

That light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That beauty in which all things work and move,
That benediction which the eclipsing curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given.
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully afar;
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

It will be seen that, whatever Shelley may from time to time have said about the immortality of the soul, he was no materialist, and no believer in the extinction of the spiritual element by death. Yet he was too wise to dogmatise upon a problem which by its very nature admits of no solution in this world. "I hope," he said, "but my hopes are not unmixed with fear for what will befall this inestimable spirit when we appear to die." On another occasion he told Trelawny, "I am content to see no farther into futurity than Plato and Bacon. My mind is tranquil; I have no fears and some hopes. In our present gross material state our faculties are clouded; when Death removes our clay coverings, the mystery will be solved." How constantly the thought of death as the revealer was present to his mind, may be gathered from an incident related by Trelawny. They were bathing in the Arno, when Shelley, who could not swim, plunged into deep water, and "lay stretched out at the bottom like a conger eel, not making the least effort or struggle to save himself." Trelawny fished him out, and when he had taken breath, he said: "I always find the bottom of the well, and they say Truth lies there. In another minute I should have found it, and you would have found an empty shell. Death is the veil which those who live call life; they sleep, and it is lifted." Yet being pressed by his friend, he refused to acknowledge a formal and precise belief in the imperishability of the human soul. "We know nothing; we have no evidence; we cannot express our inmost thoughts. They are incomprehensible events to ourselves." The clear insight into the conditions of the question conveyed by the last sentence is very characteristic of Shelley. It makes us regret the non-completion of his essay on a *Future Life*, which would certainly have stated the problem with rare lucidity and candour, and would have illuminated the abyss of doubt with a sense of spiritual realities not often found in combination with wise suspension of judgment. What he clung to amid all perplexities was the absolute and indestructible existence of the universal as perceived by us in love, beauty, and delight. Though the destiny of the personal self be obscure, these things cannot fail. The conclusion of the *Sensitive Plant* might be cited as conveying the quintessence of his hope upon this most intangible of riddles.

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
Which within its boughs like a spirit sat,
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this change, I cannot say.

I dare not guess; but in this life
Of error, ignorance, and strife,
Where nothing is, but all things seem,
And we the shadows of the dream:

It is a modest creed, and yet
Pleasant, if one considers it,
To own that death itself must be,
Like all the rest, a mockery.

That garden sweet, the lady fair,
And all sweet shades and odours there,
In truth have never passed away:
'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed; not they.

For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change; their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

But it is now time to return from this digression to the poem which suggested it, and which, more than any other, serves to illustrate its author's mood of feeling about the life beyond the grave. The last lines of *Adonais* might be read as a prophecy of his death by drowning. The frequent recurrence of this thought in his poetry is, to say the least, singular. In *Alastor* we read:—

A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The *Ode to Liberty* closes on the same note:—

As a far taper fades with fading night;
As a brief insect dies with dying day,
My song, its pinions disarrayed of might,
Drooped. O'er it closed the echoes far away
Of the great voice which did its flight sustain,
As waves which lately paved his watery way
Hiss round a drowner's head in their tempestuous play.

The *Stanzas written in Dejection, near Naples*, echo the thought with a slight variation:—

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie downlike a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne, and yet must bear,—
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

Trelawny tells a story of his friend's life at Lerici, which further illustrates his preoccupation with the thought of death at sea. He took Mrs Williams and her children out upon the bay in his little boat one afternoon, and starting suddenly from a deep reverie, into which he had fallen, exclaimed with a joyful and resolute voice, "Now let us together solve the great mystery!" Too much value must not be attached to what might have been a mere caprice of utterance. Yet the proposal not unreasonably frightened Mrs. Williams, for Shelley's friends were accustomed to expect the realisation of his wildest fancies. It may incidentally be mentioned that before the water finally claimed its victim, he had often been in peril of life upon his fatal element—during the first voyage to Ireland, while crossing the Channel with Mary in an open boat, again at Meillerie with Byron, and once at least with Williams.

A third composition of the year 1821 was inspired by the visit of Prince Mavrocordato to Pisa. He called on Shelley in April, showed him a copy of Prince Ipsilanti's proclamation, and announced that Greece was determined to strike a blow for freedom. The news aroused all Shelley's enthusiasm, and he began the lyrical drama of *Hellas*, which he has described as "a sort of imitation of the *Persae* of Æschylus." We find him at work upon it in October; and it must have been finished by the end of that month, since the dedication bears the date of November 1st, 1821. Shelley did not set great store by it. "It was written," he says, "without much care, and in one of those few moments of enthusiasm which now seldom visit me, and which make me pay dear for their visits." The preface might, if space permitted, be cited as a specimen of his sound and weighty judgment upon one of the greatest political questions of this century. What he says about the debt of the modern world to ancient Hellas, is no less pregnant than his severe strictures upon the part played by Russia in dealing with Eastern questions. For the rest, the poem is distinguished by passages of great lyrical beauty, rising at times to the sublimest raptures, and closing on the half-pathetic cadence of that well-known Chorus, "The world's great age begins anew." Of dramatic interest it has but little; nor is the play, as finished, equal to the promise held forth by the superb fragment of its so-called Prologue.* This truly magnificent torso must, I think, have been the commencement of the drama as conceived upon a different and more colossal plan which Shelley rejected for some unknown reason. It shows the influence not only of the Book of Job, but also of the Prologue in Heaven to Faust, upon his mind.

The lyric movement of the Chorus from *Hellas*, which I propose to quote, marks the highest point of Shelley's rhythmical invention. As for the matter expressed in it, we must not forget that these stanzas are written for a Chorus of Greek captive women, whose creed does not prevent their feeling a regret for the "mightier forms of an older, austerer worship." Shelley's note

* Forman, iv. p. 95.

reminds the reader, with characteristic caution and frankness, that "the popular notions of Christianity are represented in this Chorus as true in their relation to the worship they superseded, and that which in all probability they will supersede, without considering their merits in a relation more universal."

Worlds on worlds are rolling ever
From creation to decay,
Like the bubbles on a river
Sparkling, bursting, borne away.
But they are still immortal
Who, through birth's orient portal,
And death's dark chasm hurrying to and fro,
Clothe their unceasing flight
In the brief dust and light
Gathered around their chariots as they go;
New shapes they still may weave,
New gods, new laws receive;
Bright or dim are they, as the robes they last
On Death's bare ribs had cast.

A power from the unknown God,
A Promethean conqueror came;
Like a triumphal path he trod
The thorns of death and shame.
A mortal shape to him
Was like the vapor dim
Which the orient planet animates with light.
Hell, Sin, and Slavery came,
Like bloodhounds mild and tame,
Nor preyed until their Lord had taken flight.
The Moon of Mahomet
Arose, and it shall set:
While blazoned as on heaven's immortal noon
The cross leads generations on.

Swift as the radiant shapes of sleep
From one whose dreams are paradise,
Fly, when the fond wretch wakes to weep,
And day peers forth with her blank eyes;
So fleet, so faint, so fair,
The Powers of earth and air
Fled from the folding star of Bethlehem:
Apollo, Pan, and Love,
And even Olympian Jove,
Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them.
Our hills, and seas, and streams,
Dispeopled of their dreams,
Their waters turned to blood, their dew to tears,
Wailed for the golden years.

In the autumn of this year Shelley paid Lord Byron a visit at Ravenna, where he made acquaintance with the Countess Guiccioli. It was then settled that Byron, who had formed the project of

starting a journal to be called *The Liberal* in concert with Leigh Hunt, should himself settle in Pisa. Leigh Hunt was to join his brother poets in the same place. The prospect gave Shelley great pleasure, for he was sincerely attached to Hunt; and though he would not promise contributions to the journal, partly lest his name should bring discredit on it, and partly because he did not choose to appear before the world as a hanger-on of Byron's, he thoroughly approved of a plan which would be profitable to his friend by bringing him into close relation with the most famous poet of the age.* That he was not without doubts as to Byron's working easily in harness with Leigh Hunt, may be seen in his correspondence; and how fully these doubts were destined to be confirmed, is only too well known.

At Ravenna he was tormented by the report of some more than usually infamous calumny. What it was, we do not know; but that it made profound impression on his mind, appears from a remarkable letter addressed to his wife on the 16th and 17th of August from Ravenna. In it he repeats his growing weariness, and his wish to escape from society to solitude; the weariness of a nature wounded and disappointed by commerce with the world, but neither soured nor driven to fury by cruel wrongs. It is noticeable at the same time that he clings to his present place of residence:—"our roots never struck so deeply as at Pisa, and the transplanted tree flourishes not." At Pisa he had found real rest and refreshment in the society of his two friends, the Williamses. Some of his saddest and most touching lyrics of this year are addressed to Jane—for so Mrs. Williams was called; and attentive students may perceive that the thought of Emilia was already blending by subtle transitions with the new thought of Jane. One poem, almost terrible in its intensity of melancholy, is hardly explicable on the supposition that Shelley was quite happy in his home.† These words must be taken as implying no reflection either upon Mary's love for him, or upon his own power to bear the slighter troubles of domestic life. He was not a spoiled child of fortune, a weak egotist, or a querulous complainer. But he was always seeking and never finding the satisfaction of some deeper craving. In his own words, he had loved Antigone before he visited this earth: and no one woman could probably have made him happy, because he was for ever demanding more from love than it can give in the mixed circumstances of mortal life. Moreover, it must be remembered that his power of self-expression has bestowed permanent form on feelings which may have been but transitory; nor can we avoid the conclusion that, sincere as Shelley was, he, like all poets, made use of the emotion of the moment for purposes of art, converting an ephemeral mood into something typical and universal. This was almost certainly the case with *Epipsychidion.*

* See the Letter to Leigh Hunt, Pisa, Aug. 26, 1821.
† "The Serpent is shut out from paradise."

So much at any rate had to be said upon this subject; for careful readers of Shelley's minor poems are forced to the conviction that during the last year of his life he often found relief from a wretchedness, which, however real, can hardly be defined, in the sympathy of this true-hearted woman. The affection he felt for Jane was beyond question pure and honourable. All the verses he addressed to her passed through her husband's hands without the slightest interruption to their intercourse; and Mrs. Shelley, who was not unpardonably jealous of her Ariel, continued to be Mrs. Williams's warm friend. A passage from Shelley's letter of June 18, 1822, expresses the plain prose of his relation to the Williamses:—"They are people who are very pleasing to me. But words are not the instruments of our intercourse. I like Jane more and more, and I find Williams the most amiable of companions. She has a taste for music, and an eloquence of form and motions that compensate in some degree for the lack of literary refinement."

Two lyrics of this period may here be introduced, partly for the sake of their intrinsic beauty, and partly because they illustrate the fecundity of Shelley's genius during the months of tranquil industry which he passed at Pisa. The first is an invocation to Night:—

Swiftly walk over the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle grey,
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of day,
Kiss her until she be wearied out.
Than wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
"Wouldst thou me?"
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noon-tide bee,
"Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?"—And I replied,
"No, not thee!"

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon!

The second is an Epithalamium composed for a drama which his friend Williams was writing. Students of the poetic art will find it not uninteresting to compare the three versions of this Bridal Song, given by Mr. Forman.* They prove that Shelley was no careless writer.

The golden gates of sleep unbar
Where strength and beauty, met together,
Kindle their image like a star
In a sea of glassy weather!

Night, with all thy stars look down—
Darkness, weep thy holiest dew!
Never smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true.
Let eyes not see their own delight;
Haste, swift Hour, and thy flight
Oft renew.

Fairies, sprites, and angels, keep her!
Holy stars, permit no wrong!
And return to wake the sleeper,
Dawn, ere it be long.
O joy! O fear! what will be done
In the absence of the sun!
Come along!

Lyrics like these, delicate in thought and exquisitely finished in form, were produced with a truly wonderful profusion in this season of his happiest fertility. A glance at the last section of Mr. Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* shows how large a place they occupy among the permanent jewels of our literature.

The month of January added a new and most important member to the little Pisan circle. This was Captain Edward John Trelawny to whom more than to any one else but Hogg and Mrs. Shelley, the students of the poet's life are indebted for details at once accurate and characteristic. Trelawny had lived a free life in all quarters of the globe, far away from literary cliques and the society of cities, in contact with the sternest realities of existence, which had developed his selfreliance and his physical qualities to the utmost. The impression, therefore, made on him by Shelley has to be gravely estimated by all who still incline to treat the poet as a pathological specimen of humanity. This true child of nature rec-

* Vol. iv. p. 89.

ognised in his new friend far more than in Byron the stuff of a real man. "To form a just idea of his poetry, you should have witnessed his daily life; his words and actions best illustrated his writings." "The cynic Byron acknowledged him to be the best and ablest man he had ever known. The truth was, Shelley loved everything better than himself." "I have seen Shelley and Byron in society, and the contrast was as marked as their characters. The former, not thinking of himself, was as much at ease as in his own home, omitting no occasion of obliging those whom he came in contact with, readily conversing with all or any who addressed him, irrespective of age or rank, dress or address." "All who heard him felt the charm of his simple, earnest manner: while Byron knew him to be exempt from the egotism, pedantry, coxcombry, and more than all the rivalry of authorship." "Shelley's mental activity was infectious; he kept your brain in constant action." "He was always in earnest." "He never laid aside his book and magic mantle; he waved his wand, and Byron, after a faint show of defiance, stood mute. . . . . Shelley's earnestness and just criticism held him captive." These sentences, and many others, prove that Trelawny. himself somewhat of a cynic, cruelly exposing false pretensions, and detesting affectation in any form, paid unreserved homage to the heroic qualities of this "dreamy bard,"— uncommonly awkward," as he also called him—bad rider and poor seaman as he was—"over-sensitive," and "eternally brooding on his own thoughts," who "had seen no more of the waking-day than a girl at a boarding-school." True to himself, gentle, tender, with the courage of a lion, "frank and outspoken, like a well-conditioned boy, well-bred and considerate for others, because he was totally devoid of selfishness and vanity," Shelley seemed to this unprejudiced companion of his last few months that very rare product ior which Dogenes searched in vain--a man.

Their first meeting must be told in Trelawny's own words—words no less certain of immortality than the fame of him they celebrate. "The Williamses received me in their earnest, cordial manner; we had a great deal to communicate to each other, and were in loud and animated conversation, when I was rather put out by observing in the passage near the open door, opposite to where I sat, a pair of glittering eyes steadily fixed on mine; it was too dark to make out whom they belonged to. With the acuteness of a woman, Mrs. Williams's eyes followed the direction of mine, and going to the doorway she laughingly said, 'Come in, Shelley, it's only our friend Tre just arrived.' Swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall, thin stripling held out both his hands; and although I could hardly believe, as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face, that it could be the poet, I returned his warm pressure. After the ordinary greetings and courtesies he sat down and listened. I was silent from astonishment; was it possible this mild-looking, beardless boy, could be the veritable monster at war with all the world?—excommunicated by the Fathers of the Church, deprived of his civil rights by the fiat of a grim Lord Chancellor

discarded by every member of his family, and denounced by the rival sages of our literature as the founder of a Satanic school? I could not believe; it must be a hoax. He was habited like a boy in a black jacket and trousers, which he seemed to have outgrown, or his tailor, as is the custom, had most shamefully stinted him in his 'sizings.' Mrs. Williams saw my embarrassment, and to relieve me asked Shelley what book he had in his hand? His face brightened, and he answered briskly,—

"'Calderon's *Magico Prodigioso* — I am translating some passages in it.'

"'Oh, read it to us.'

"Shoved off from the shore of commonplace incidents that could not interest him, and fairly launched on a theme that did, he instantly became oblivious of everything but the book in his hand. The masterly manner in which he analysed the genius of the author, his lucid interpretation of the story, and the case with which he translated into our language the most subtle and imaginative passages of the Spanish poet, were marvellous, as was his command of the two languages. After this touch of his quality I no longer doubted his identity; a dead silence ensued; looking up, I asked,—

"'Where is he?'

"Mrs. Williams said, 'Who? Shelley? Oh, he comes and goes like a spirit, no one knows when or where.'"

Two little incidents which happened in the winter of 1821–2 deserve to be recorded. News reached the Pisan circle early in December that a man who had insulted the Host at Lucca was sentenced to be burned. Shelley proposed that the English—himself, Byron, Medwin, and their friend Mr. Taafe—should immediately arm and ride off to rescue him. The scheme took Byron's fancy; but they agreed to try less Quixotic measures before they had recourse to force, and their excitement was calmed by hearing that the man's sentence had been commuted to the galleys. The other affair brought them less agreeably into contact with the Tuscan police. The party were riding home one afternoon in March, when a mounted dragoon came rushing by, breaking their ranks and nearly unhorsing Mr. Taafe. Byron and Shelley rode after him to remonstrate; but the man struck Shelley from his saddle with a sabre blow. The English then pursued him into Pisa, making such a clatter that one of Byron's servants issued with a pitchfork from the Casa Lanfranchi, and wounded the fellow somewhat seriously, under the impression that it was necessary to defend his master. Shelley called the whole matter "a trifling piece of business;" but it was strictly investigated by the authorities; and though the dragoon was found to have been in the wrong, Byron had to retire for a season to Leghorn. Another consequence was the exile of Count Gamba and his father from Tuscany, which led to Byron's final departure from Pisa.

The even current of Shelley's life was not often broken by such adventures. Trelawny gives the following account of how he passed his days: he "was up at six or seven, reading Plato, Sophocles, or

Spinoza, with the accompaniment of a hunch of dry bread: then he joined Williams in a sail on the Arno, in a flat-bottomed skiff, book in hand, and from thence he went to the pine-forest, or some out-of-the-way place. When the birds went to roost he returned home, and talked and read until midnight. The great wood of stone pines on the Pisan Maremma was his favourite study. Trelawny tells us how he found him there alone one day, and in what state was the MS. of that prettiest lyric, *Ariel, to Miranda take.* "It was a frightful scrawl; words smeared out with his finger, and one upon the other, over and over in tiers, and all run together in most 'admired disorder;' it might have been taken for a sketch of a marsh overgrown with bulrushes, and the blots for wild ducks; such a dashed-off daub as self-conceited artists mistake for a manifestation of genius. On my observing this to him, he answered, 'When my brain gets heated with thought, it soon boils, and throws off images and words faster than I can skim them off. In the morning, when cooled down, out of the rude sketch as you justly call it, I shall attempt a drawing."

A daily visit to Byron diversified existence. Byron talked more sensibly with Shelley than with his commonplace acquaintance; and when he began to gossip, Shelley retired into his own thoughts. Then they would go pistol-shooting, Byron's trembling hand contrasting with his friend's firmness. They had invented a "little language" for this sport: firing was called *tiring;* hitting, *colping;* missing, *mancating*, &c. It was in fact a kind of pigeon Italian. Shelley acquired two nick-names in the circle of his Pisan friends, both highly descriptive. He was Ariel and the Snake. The latter suited him because of his noiseless gliding movement, bright eyes, and ethereal diet. It was first given to him by Byron during a reading of *Faust.* When he came to the line of Mephistopheles, "Wie meine Muhme, die berühmte Schlange," and translated it, "My aunt, the renowned Snake," Byron cried, "Then you are her nephew." Shelley by no means resented the epithet. Indeed he alludes to it in his letters, and in a poem already referred to above.

Soon after Trelawny's arrival the party turned their thoughts to nautical affairs. Shelley had already done a good deal of boating with Williams on the Arno and the Serchio, and had on one occasion nearly lost his life by the capsizing of their tiny craft. They now determined to build a larger yacht for excursions on the sea; while Byron, liking the project of a summer residence upon the Bay of Spezia, made up his mind to have one too. Shelley's was to be an open boat carrying sail, Byron's a large decked schooner. The construction of both was entrusted to a Genoese builder, under the direction of Trelawny's friend, Captain Roberts. Such was the birth of the ill-fated *Don Juan*, which cost the lives of Shelley and Williams, and of the *Bolivar*, which carried Byron off to Genoa before he finally set sail for Greece. Captain Roberts was allowed to have his own way about the latter; but Shelley and Williams had set their hearts upon a model for their little yacht, which did not

suit the Captain's notions of sea-worthiness. Williams overruled his objections, and the *Don Juan* was built according to his cherished fancy. "When it was finished," says Trelawny, "it took two tons of iron ballast to bring her down to her bearings, and then she was very crank in a breeze, though not deficient in beam. She was fast, strongly built, and Torbay rigged." She was christened by Lord Byron, not wholly with Shelley's approval; and one young English sailor, Charles Vivian, in addition to Williams and Shelley, formed her crew. "It was great fun," says Trelawny, "to witness Williams teaching the poet how to steer, and other points of seamanship. As usual, Shelley had a book in hand, saying he could read and steer at the same time, as one was mental, the other mechanical." "The boy was quick and handy, and used to boats. Williams was not deficient as I anticipated, but over-anxious, and wanted practice, which alone makes a man prompt in emergency. Shelley was intent on catching images from the ever-changing sea and sky; he heeded not the boat."

CHAPTER VII.

LAST DAYS.

THE advance of spring made the climate of Pisa too hot for comfort; and early in April Trelawny and Williams rode off to find a suitable lodging for themselves and the Shelleys on the Gulf of Spezia. They pitched upon a house called the Villa Magni, between Lerici and San Terenzio, which "looked more like a boat or bathing-house than a place to live in. It consisted of a terrace or ground-floor unpaved, and used for storing boat-gear and fishing-tackle, and of a single storey over it, divided into a hall or saloon and four small rooms, which had once been white-washed; there was one chimney for cooking. This place we thought the Shelleys might put up with for the summer. The only good thing about it was a verandah facing the sea, and almost over it." When it came to be inhabited, the central hall was used for the living and eating room of the whole party. The Shelleys occupied two rooms facing each other; the Williamses had one of the remaining chambers, and Trelawny another. Access to these smaller apartments could only be got through the saloon; and this circumstance once gave rise to a ludicrous incident, when Shelley, having lost his clothes out bathing, had to cross, *in puris naturalibus*, not undetected, though covered in his retreat by the clever Italian handmaiden, through a luncheon party assembled in the dining-room. The horror of the ladies at the poet's unexpected apparition and his innocent self-defence are well described by Trelawny. Life in the villa was of the simplest description. To get food was no easy matter; and the style of the furniture may be guessed by Trelawny's laconic remark that the sea was his only washing-basin.

They arrived at Villa Magni on the 26th of April, and began a course of life which was not interrupted till the final catastrophe of July 8. These few weeks were in many respects the happiest of Shelley's life. We seem to discern in his last letter of importance, recently edited by Mr. Garnett, that he was now conscious of having reached a platform from which he could survey his past achievement, and whence he would probably have risen to a loftier altitude, by a calmer and more equable exercise of powers which had been ripening the last three years of life in Italy. Meanwhile, "I am content," he writes, "if the heaven above me is calm for the passing moment."

And this tranquillity was perfect, with none of the oppressive sense of coming danger, which distinguishes the calm before a storm. He was far away from the distractions of the world he hated, in a scene of indescribable beauty, among a population little removed from the state of savages, who enjoyed the primitive pleasures of a race at one with nature, and toiled with hardy perseverance on the element he loved so well. His company was thoroughly congenial and well mixed. He spent his days in excursions on the water with Williams, or in solitary musings in his cranky little skiff, floating upon the shallows in shore, or putting out to sea and waiting for the landward breeze to bring him home. The evenings were passed upon the terrace, listening to Jane's guitar, conversing with Trelawny, or reading his favourite poets aloud to the assembled party.

In this delightful solitude, this round of simple occupations, this uninterrupted communion with nature, Shelley's enthusiasms and inspirations revived with their old strength. He began a poem, which, if we may judge of its scale by the fragment we possess, would have been one of the longest, as it certainly is one of the loftiest of his masterpieces. The *Triumph of Life* is composed in no strain of compliment to the powers of this world, which quell untameable spirits, and enslave the noblest by the operation of blind passions and inordinate ambitions. It is rather a pageant of the spirit dragged in chains, led captive to the world, the flesh, and the devil. The sonorous march and sultry splendour of the terza rima stanzas, bearing on their tide of song those multitudes of forms, processionally grand, yet misty with the dust of their own tramplings, and half-shrouded in a lurid robe of light, affect the imagination so powerfully that we are fain to abandon criticism and acknowledge only the dæmonic fascinations of this solemn mystery. Some have compared the *Triumph of Life* to a Panathenaic pomp: others have found in it a reflex of the burning summer heat, and blazing sea, and onward undulations of interminable waves, which were the cradle of its maker as he wrote. The imagery of Dante plays a part, and Dante has controlled the structure. The genius of the Revolution passes by: Napoleon is there, and Rousseau serves for guide. The great of all ages are arraigned, and the spirit of the world is brought before us, while its heroes pass, unveil their faces for a moment, and are swallowed in the throng that has no ending. But how Shelley meant to solve the problems he has raised, by what sublime philosophy he purposed to resolve the discords of this revelation more soul-shattering than Daniel's *Mene*, we cannot even guess. The poem, as we have it, breaks abruptly with these words: "Then what is Life? I cried" —a sentence of profoundest import, when we remember that the questioner was now about to seek its answer in the halls of Death.

To separate any single passage from a poem which owes so much of its splendour to the continuity of music and the succession of visionary images, does it cruel wrong. Yet this must be attempted; for Shelley is the only English poet who has successfully handled that most difficult of metres, *terza rima*. His power over

complicated versification cannot be appreciated except by duly noticing the method he employed in treating a structure alien, perhaps, to the genius of our literature, and even in Italian used with perfect mastery by none but Dante. To select the introduction and part of the first paragraph will inflict less violence upon the *Triumph of Life* as a whole, than to detach one of its episodes

Swift as a spirit hastening to the task
Of glory and of good, the Sun sprang forth
Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask

Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth.
The smokeless altars of the mountain snows
Flamed above crimson clouds, and at the birth

Of light, the Ocean's orison arose,
To which the birds tempered their matin lay.
All flowers in field or forest which unclose

Their trembling eyelids to the kiss of day
Swinging their censers in the element,
With orient incense lit by the new ray,

Burned slow and inconsumably, and sent
Their odorous sighs up to the smiling air:
And, in succession due, did continent,

Isle, ocean, and all things that in them wear
The form and character of mortal mould,
Rise as the Sun their father rose, to bear

Their portion of the toil, which he of old
Took as his own, and then imposed on them.
But I, whom thoughts which must remain untold

Had kept as wakeful as the stars that gem
The cone of night, now they were laid asleep,
Stretched my faint limbs beneath the hoary stem

Which an old chestnut flung athwart the steep
Of a green Apennine. Before me fled
The night; behind me rose the day; the deep

Was at my feet, and Heaven above my head,–
When a strange trance over my fancy grew
Which was not slumber, for the shade it spread

Was so transparent that the scene came through
As clear as, when a veil of light is drawn
O'er evening hills, they glimmer; and I knew

That I had felt the freshness of that dawn
Bathe in the same cold dew my brow and hair
And sate as thus upon that slope of lawn

Under the self-same bough, and heard as there
The birds, the fountains, and the ocean, hold
Sweet talk in music through the enamoured air
And then a vision on my brain was rolled.

Such is the exordium of the poem. It will be noticed that at this point one series of the interwoven triplets is concluded. The *Triumph of Life* itself begins with a new series of rhymes, describing the vision for which preparation has been made in the preceding prelude. It is not without perplexity that an ear unaccustomed to the windings of the *terza rima*, feels its way among them. Entangled and impeded by the labyrinthine sounds, the reader might be compared to one who, swimming in his dreams, is carried down the course of a swift river clogged with clinging and retarding water-weeds. He moves; but not without labour: yet after a while the very obstacles add fascination to his movement.

As in that trance of wondrous thought I lay,
This was the tenour of my waking dream :—
Methought I sate beside a public way

Thick strewn with summer dust, and a great stream
Of people there was hurrying to and fro,
Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,

All hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
He made one of the multitude, and so

Was bourne amid the crowd, as through the sky
One of the million leaves of summer's bier;
Old age and youth, manhood and infancy,

Mixed in one mighty torrent did appear:
Some flying from the thing they feared, and some
Seeking the object of another's fear;

And others, as with steps towards the tomb,
Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,
And others mournfully within the gloom

Of their own shadow walked and called it death;
And some fled from it as it were a ghost,
Half fainting in the affliction of vain breath.

But more, with motions which each other crossed,
Pursued or spurned the shadows the clouds threw,
Or birds within the noon-day ether lost,

Upon that path where flowers never grew—
And weary with vain toil and faint for thirst,
Heard not the fountains, whose melodious dew

Out of their mossy cells for ever burst;
Nor felt the breeze which from the forest told
Of grassy paths, and wood-lawn interpersed,

With over-arching elms, and caverns cold,
And violet banks where sweet dreams brood;—but the
Pursued their serious folly as of old.

Here let us break the chain of rhymes that are unbroken in the text, to notice the extraordinary skill with which the rhythm has been woven in one paragraph, suggesting by recurrences of sound the passing of a multitude, which is presented at the same time to the eye of fancy by accumulated images. The next eleven triplets introduce the presiding genius of the pageant. Students of Petrarch's *Trionfi* will not fail to note what Shelley owes to that poet, and how he has transmuted the definite imagery of mediæval symbolism into something metaphysical and mystic.

And as I gazed, methought that in the way
The throng grew wilder, as the woods of June
When the south wind shakes the extinguished day;

And a cold glare, intenser than the noon
But icy cold, obscured with blinding light
The sun, as he the stars. Like the young moon—

When on the sunlit limits of the night
Her white shell trembles amid crimson air,
And whilst the sleeping tempest gathers might,—

Doth, as the herald of its coming, bear
The ghost of its dead mother, whose dim form
Bends in dark ether from her infant's chair;

So came a chariot on the silent storm
Of its own rushing splendour, and a Shape
So sate within, as one whom years deform,

Beneath a dusky hood and double cape,
Crouching within the shadow of a tomb.
And o'er what seemed the head a cloud-like crape

Was bent, a dun and faint ethereal gloom
Tempering the light. Upon the chariot beam
A Janus-visaged Shadow did assume

The guidance of that wonder-wingèd team;
The shapes which drew it in thick lightnings
Were lost:—I heard alone on the air's soft stream

The music of their ever-moving wings.
All the four faces of that charioteer
Had their eyes banded: little profit brings

Speed in the van and blindness in the rear,
Nor then avail the beams that quench the sun,
Or that with banded eyes could pierce the sphere

Of all that is, has been, or will be done.
So ill was the car guided—but it past
With solemn speed majestically on.

The intense stirring of his imagination implied by this supreme poetic effort, the solitude of Villa Magni, and the elemental fervour of Italian heat to which he recklessly exposed himself, contributed to make Shelley more than usually nervous. His somnambulism returned, and he saw visions. On one occasion he thought that the dead Allegra rose from the sea, and clapped her hands, and laughed, and beckoned to him. On another he roused the whole house at night by his screams, and remained terror-frozen in the trance produced by an appalling vision. This mood he communicated, in some measure, to his friends. One of them saw what she afterwards believed to have been his phantom, and another dreamed that he was dead. They talked much of death, and it is noticeable that the last words written to him by Jane were these :—"Are you going to join your friend Plato?"

The Leigh Hunts at last arrived in Genoa, whence they again sailed for Leghorn. Shelley heard the news upon the 20th of June. He immediately prepared to join them; and on the 1st of July set off with Williams in the *Don Juan* for Leghorn, where he rushed into the arms of his old friend. Leigh Hunt, in his autobiography, writes, "I will not dwell upon the moment." From Leghorn he drove with the Hunts to Pisa, and established them in the ground-floor of Byron's Palazzo Lanfranchi, as comfortably as was consistent with his lordship's variable moods. The negotiations which had preceded Hunt's visit to Italy, raised forebodings in Shelley's mind as to the reception he would meet from Byron; nor were these destined to be unfulfilled. Trelawny tells how irksome the poet found it to have "a man with a sick wife, and seven disorderly children," established in his palace. To Mrs. Hunt he was positively brutal; nor could he tolerate her self-complacent husband, who, while he had voyaged far and wide in literature, had never wholly cast the slough of Cockneyism. Hunt was himself hardly powerful enough to understand the true magnitude of Shelley, though he loved him; and the tender solicitude of the great, unselfish Shelley, for the smaller, harmlessly conceited Hunt, is pathetic. They spent a pleasant day or two together, Shelley showing the Campo Santo and other sights of Pisa to his English friend. Hunt thought him somewhat less hopeful than he used to be, but improved in health and strength and spirits. One little touch relating to their last conversation, deserves to be recorded:—"He assented warmly to an opinion I expressed in the cathedral at Pisa, while the organ was playing, that a truly divine religion might yet be established, if charity were really made the principle of it, instead of faith."

On the night following that day of rest, Shelley took a post-chaise for Leghorn; and early in the afternoon of the next day he set sail, with Williams, on his return voyage to Lerici. The sailor-boy, Charles Vivian, was their only companion. Trelawny, who was detained on board the *Bolivar*, in the Leghorn harbour, watched them start. The weather for some time had been unusually hot and dry. "Processions of priests and religiosi have been for several days past praying for rain;" so runs the last entry in Williams's diary; "but the gods are either angry or nature too powerful." Trelawny's Genoese mate observed, as the *Don Juan* stood out to sea, that they ought to have started at three a. m. instead of twelve hours later; adding "the devil is brewing mischief." Then a sea-fog withdrew the *Don Juan* from their sight. It was an oppressively sultry afternoon. Trelawny went down into his cabin, and slept; but was soon roused by the noise of the ships' crews in the harbour making all ready for a gale. In a short time the tempest was upon them, with wind, rain, and thunder. It did not last more than twenty minutes; and at its end Trelawny looked out anxiously for Shelley's boat. She was nowhere to be seen, and nothing could be heard of her. In fact, though Trelawny could not then be absolutely sure of the catastrophe, she had sunk, struck in all probability by the prow of a felucca, but whether by accident or with the intention of running her down, is still uncertain.

On the morning of the third day after the storm, Trelawny rode to Pisa, and communicated his fears to Hunt. "I then went upstairs to Byron. When I told him, his lip quivered, and his voice faltered as he questioned me." Couriers were despatched to search the sea-coast, and to bring the *Bolivar* from Leghorn. Trelawny rode in person toward Via Reggio, and there found a punt, a water-keg, and some bottles, which had been in Shelley's boat. A week passed, Trelawny patrolling the shore with the coast-guardsmen, but hearing of no new discovery, until at last two bodies were cast upon the sand. One found near Via Reggio, on the 18th of July, was Shelley's. It had his jacket, "with the volume of Æschylus in one pocket, and Keats's poems in the other, doubled back, as if the reader, in the act of reading, had hastily thrust it away." The other, found near the tower of Migliarino, at about four miles' distance, was that of Williams. The sailor-boy, Charles Vivian, though cast up on the same day, the 18th of July, near Massa, was not heard of by Trelawny till the 29th.

Nothing now remained but to tell the whole dreadful truth to the two widowed women, who had spent the last days in agony of alternate despair and hope at Villa Magni. This duty Trelawny discharged faithfully and firmly. "The next day I prevailed on them," he says, "to return with me to Pisa. The misery of that night and the journey of the next day, and of many days and nights that followed, I can neither describe nor forget." It was decided that Shelley should be buried at Rome, near his friend Keats and

his son William, and that Williams's remains should be taken to England. But first the bodies had to be burned; and for permission to do this Trelawny, who all through had taken the lead, applied to the English Embassy at Florence. After some difficulty it was granted.

What remains to be said concerning the cremation of Shelley's body on the 6th of August, must be told in Trelawny's own words. Williams, it may be stated, had been burned on the preceding day.

"Three white wands had been stuck in the sand to mark the poet's grave, but as they were at some distance from each other, we had to cut a trench thirty yards in length, in the line of the sticks, to ascertain the exact spot, and it was nearly an hour before we came upon the grave.

"In the meantime Byron and Leigh Hunt arrived in the carriage, attended by soldiers, and the Health Officer, as before. The lonely and grand scenery that surrounded us, so exactly harmonized with Shelley's genius, that I could imagine his spirit soaring over us; old battlemented watch-towers stretched along the coast, backed by the marble-crested Apennines glistening in the sun, picturesque from their diversified outlines, and not a human dwelling was in sight.

"As I thought of the delight Shelley felt in such scenes of loneliness and grandeur whilst living, I felt we were no better than a herd of wolves or a pack of wild dogs, in tearing out his battered and naked body from the pure yellow sand that lay so lightly over it, to drag him back to the light of day; but the dead have no voice, nor had I power to check the sacrilege—the work went on silently in the deep and unresisting sand, not a word was spoken, for the Italians have a touch of sentiment, and their feelings are easily excited into sympathy. Byron was silent and thoughtful. We were startled and drawn together by a dull, hollow sound that followed the blow of a mattock; the iron had struck a skull, and the body was soon uncovered. . . . . After the fire was well kindled we repeated the ceremony of the previous day; and more wine was poured over Shelley's dead body than he had consumed during his life. This with the oil and salt made the yellow flames glisten and quiver. The heat from the sun and fire was so intense that the atmosphere was tremulous and wavy. . . . . The fire was so fierce as to produce a white heat on the iron, and to reduce its contents to gray ashes. The only portions that were not consumed were some fragments of bones, the jaw, and the skill; but what surprised us all was that the heart remained entire. In snatching this relic from the fiery furnace, my hand was severely burnt; and had any one seen me do the act, I should have been put into quarantine."

Shelley's heart was given to Hunt, who subsequently, not without reluctance and unseemly dispute, resigned it to Mrs. Shelley. It is now at Boscombe. His ashes were carried by Trelawny to Rome and buried in the Protestant cemetery, so touchingly described by him in his letter to Peacock, and afterwards so sublimely

in *Adonais*. The epitaph, composed by Hunt, ran thus: "Percy Bysshe Shelley, Cor Cordium, Natus iv. Aug. MDCCXCII. Obiit VIII Jul. MDCCCXXII." To the Latin words Trelawny, faithfullest and most devoted of friends, added three lines from Ariel's song, much loved in life by Shelley:

> Nothing of him that doth fade,
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange.

"And so," writes Lady Shelley, "the sea and the earth closed over one who was a poet, and still greater as a philanthropist; and of whom it may be said, that his wild spiritual character seems to have prepared him for being thus snatched from life under circumstances of mingled terror and beauty, while his powers were yet in their spring freshness, and age had not come to render the ethereal body decrepit, or to wither the heart which could not be consumed by fire."

CHAPTER VIII.

EPILOGUE.

After some deliberation I decided to give this little work on Shelley the narrative rather than the essay form, impelled thereto by one commanding reason. Shelley's life and his poetry are indissolubly connected. He acted what he thought and felt, with a directness rare among his brethren of the poet's craft; while his verse, with the exception of *The Cenci*, expressed little but the animating thoughts and aspirations of his life. That life, moreover, was "a miracle of thirty years," so crowded with striking incident and varied experience that, as he said himself, he had already lived longer than his father, and ought to be reckoned with the men of ninety. Through all vicissitudes he preserved his youth inviolate, and died, like one whom the gods love, or like a hero of Hellenic story, young, despite grey hairs and suffering. His life has, therefore, to be told, in order that his life-work may be rightly valued: for, great as that was, he, the man, was somehow greater; and noble as it truly is, the memory of himself is nobler.

To the world he presented the rare spectacle of a man passionate for truth, and unreservedly obedient to the right as he discerned it. The anomaly which made his practical career a failure, lay just here. The right he followed was too often the antithesis of ordinary morality: in his desire to cast away the false and grasp the true, he overshot the mark of prudence. The blending in him of a pure and earnest purpose with moral and social theories that could not but have proved pernicious to mankind at large, produced at times an almost grotesque mixture in his actions no less than in his verse. We cannot, therefore, wonder that society, while he lived, felt the necessity of asserting itself against him. But now that he has passed into the company of the great dead, and time has softened down the asperities of popular judgment, we are able to learn the real lesson of his life and writings. That is not to be sought in any of his doctrines, but rather in his fearless bearing, his resolute loyalty to an unselfish and in the simplest sense benevolent ideal. It is this which constitutes his supreme importance for us English at the present time. Ours is an age in which ideals are rare, and we belong to a race in which men who follow them so single-heartedly are not common.

As a poet, Shelley contributed a new quality to English litera-

ture—a quality of ideality, freedom, and spiritual audacity, which severe critics of other nations think we lack. Byron's daring is in a different region: his elemental wordliness and pungent satire do not liberate our energies, or cheer us with new hopes and splendid vistas. Wordsworth, the very antithesis to Shelley in his reverent accord with institutions, suits our meditative mood, sustains us with a sound philosophy, and braces us by healthy contact with the Nature he so dearly loved. But in Wordsworth there is none of Shelley's magnetism. What remains of permanent value in Coleridge's poetry—such work as *Christabel*, the *Ancient Mariner*, or *Kubla Khan*—is a product of pure artistic fancy, tempered by the author's mysticism. Keats, true and sacred poet as he was, loved Nature with a somewhat sensuous devotion. She was for him a mistress rather than a Diotima; nor did he share the prophetic fire which burns in Shelley's verse, quite apart from the direct enunciation of his favourite tenets. In none of Shelley's greatest contemporaries was the lyrical faculty so paramount; and whether we consider his minor songs, his odes, or his more complicated choral dramas, we acknowledge that he was the loftiest and the most spontaneous singer of our language. In range of power he was also conspicuous above the rest. Not only did he write the best lyrics, but the best tragedy, the best translations, and the best familiar poems of his century. As a satirist and humourist, I cannot place him so high as some of his admirers do; and the purely polemical portions of his poems, those in which he puts forth his antagonism to tyrants and religions and custom in all its myriad forms, seem to me to degenerate at intervals into poor rhetoric.

While his genius was so varied and its flight so unapproached in swiftness, it would be vain to deny that Shelley, as an artist, had faults from which the men with whom I have compared him were more free. The most prominent of these are haste, incoherence, verbal carelessness, incompleteness, a want of narrative force, and a weak hold on objective realities. Even his warmest admirers, if they are sincere critics, will concede that his verse, taken altogether, is marked by inequality. In his eager self-abandonment to inspiration, he produced much that is unsatisfying simply because it is not ripe. There was no defect of power in him, but a defect of patience; and the final word to be pronounced in estimating the larger bulk of his poetry is the word immature. Not only was the poet young; but the fruit of his young mind had been plucked before it had been duly mellowed by reflection. Again, he did not care enough for common things to present them with artistic fulness. He was intolerant of detail, and thus failed to model with the roundness that we find in Goethe's work. He flew at the grand, the spacious, the sublime; and did not always succeed in realising for his readers what he had imagined. A certain want of faith in his own powers, fostered by the extraordinary discouragement under which he had to write, prevented him from finishing what he began, or from giving that ultimate form of perfection to his longer works which we admire in shorter pieces like the *Ode to*

the West Wind. When a poem was ready, he had it hastily printed, and passed on to fresh creative efforts. If anything occurred to interrupt his energy, he flung the sketch aside. Some of these defects, if we may use this word at all to indicate our sense that Shelley might by care have been made equal to his highest self, were in a great measure the correlative of his chief quality—the ideality, of which I have already spoken. He composed with all his faculties, mental, emotional, and physical, at the utmost strain, at a white heat of intense fervour, striving to attain one object, the truest and most passionate investiture for the thoughts which had inflamed his ever-quick imagination. The result is that his finest work has more the stamp of something natural and elemental—the wind, the sea, the depth of air—than of a mere artistic product. Plato would have said: the Muses filled this man with sacred madness, and, when he wrote, he was no longer in his own control. There was, moreover, ever-present in his nature an effort, an aspiration after a better than the best this world can show, which prompted him to blend the choicest products of his thought and fancy with the fairest images borrowed from the earth on which he lived. He never willingly composed except under the impulse to body forth a vision of the love and light and life which was the spirit of the power he worshipped. This persistent upward striving, this earnestness, this passionate intensity, this piety of soul and purity of inspiration, give a quite unique spirituality to his poems. But it cannot be expected that the colder perfections of Academic art should be always found in them. They have something of the waywardness and negligence of nature, something of the *asymmetreia* we admire in the earlier creations of Greek architecture. That Shelley, acute critic and profound student as he was, could conform himself to rule and show himself an artist in the stricter sense, is, however, abundantly proved by *The Cenci* and by *Adonias.* The reason why he did not always observe this method will be understood by those who have studied his *Defence of Poetry*, and learned to sympathise with his impassioned theory of art.

Working on this small scale, it is difficult to do barest justice to Shelley's life or poetry. The materials for the former are almost overwhelmingly copious and strangely discordant. Those who ought to meet in love over his grave, have spent their time in quarrelling about him, and baffling the most eager seeker for the truth.* Through the turbid atmosphere of their recriminations it is impossible to discern the whole personality of the man. By careful comparison and refined manipulation of the biographical treasures at our disposal, a fair portrait of Shelley might still be set before the reader with the accuracy of a finished picture. That labour of exquisite art and of devoted love still remains to be accomplished, though in the meantime Mr. W. M. Rossetti's Memoir is a most valuable instalment. Shelley in his lifetime bound those who knew him with a chain of loyal affection, impressing observers

* See Lady Shelley *v.* Hogg; Trelawny *v.* the Shelley family; Peacock *v.* Lady Shelley; Garnett *v.* Peacock; Garnett *v.* Trelawny; McCarthy *v.* Hogg, &c., &c.

so essentially different as Hogg, Byron, Peacock, Leigh Hunt, Trelawny, Medwin, Williams, with the conviction that he was the gentlest, purest, bravest, and most spiritual being they had ever met. The same conviction is forced upon his biographer. During his four last years this most loveable of men was becoming gradually riper, wiser, truer to his highest instincts. The imperfections of his youth were being rapidly absorbed. His self-knowledge was expanding, his character mellowing, and his genius growing daily stronger. Without losing the fire that burned in him, he had been lessoned by experience into tempering its fervour; and when he reached the age of twenty-nine, he stood upon the height of his most glorious achievement, ready to unfold his wings for a yet sublimer flight. At that moment, when life at last seemed about to offer him rest, unimpeded activity, and happiness, death robbed the world of his maturity. Posterity has but the product of his cruder years, the assurance that he had already outlived them into something nobler, and the tragedy of his untimely end.

If a final word were needed to utter the unutterable sense of waste excited in us by Shelley's premature absorption into the mystery of the unknown, we might find it in the last lines of his own *Alastor:*

> Art and eloquence,
> And all the shows o' the world, are frail and vain
> To weep a loss that turns their light to shade.
> It is a woe "too deep for tears," when all
> Is reft at once, when some surpassing spirit,
> Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
> Those who remain behind nor sobs nor groans,
> The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
> But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
> Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
> Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

COWPER

BY

GOLDWIN SMITH

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COWPER.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE.

COWPER is the most important English poet of the period between Pope and the illustrious group headed by Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley, which arose out of the intellectual ferment of the European Revolution. As a reformer of poetry, who called it back from conventionality to nature, and at the same time as the teacher of a new school of sentiment which acted as a solvent upon the existing moral and social system, he may perhaps himself be numbered among the precursors of the Revolution, though he was certainly the mildest of them all. As a sentimentalist he presents a faint analogy to Rousseau, whom in natural temperament he somewhat resembled. He was also the great poet of the religious revival which marked the latter part of the eighteenth century in England, and which was called Evangelicism within the establishment, and Methodism without. In this way he is associated with Wesley and Whitefield, as well as with the philanthropists of the movement, such as Wilberforce, Thornton, and Clarkson. As a poet he touches, on different sides of his character, Goldsmith, Crabbe, and Burns. With Goldsmith and Crabbe he shares the honour of improving English taste in the sense of truthfulness and simplicity. To Burns he felt his affinity, across a gulf of social circumstance, and in spite of a dialect not yet made fashionable by Scott. Besides his poetry, he holds a high, perhaps the highest place, among English letter-writers ; and the collection of his letters appended to Southey's biography forms, with the biographical portions of his poetry, the materials for a sketch of his life. Southey's biography itself is very helpful, though too prolix and too much filled out with dissertations for common readers. Had its author only done for Cowper what he did for Nelson ! *

William Cowper came of the Whig nobility of the robe. His great-uncle, after whom he was named, was the Whig Lord Chan-

* Our acknowledgments are also due to Mr. Benham, the writer of the Memoir prefixed to the Globe Edition of Cowper.

cellor of Anne and George I. His grandfather was that Spencer Cowper, judge of the Common Pleas, for love of whom the pretty Quakeress drowned herself. and who, by the rancour of party, was indicted for her murder. His father, the Rev. John Cowper, D.D., was chaplain to George II. His mother was a Donne, of the race of the poet, and descended by several lines from Henry III. A Whig and a gentleman he was by birth, a Whig and a gentleman he remained to the end. He was born on the 15th November (old style), 1731, in his father's rectory of Berkhampstead. From nature he received, with a large measure of the gifts of genius, a still larger measure of its painful sensibilities In his portrait by Romney the brow bespeaks intellect, the features feeling and refinement, the eye madness. The stronger parts of character, the combative and propelling forces, he evidently lacked from the beginning. For the battle of life he was totally unfit. His judgment in its healthy state was, even on practical questions, sound enough, as his letters abundantly prove; but his sensibility not only rendered him incapable of wrestling with a rough world, but kept him always on the verge of madness, and frequently plunged him into it. To the malady which threw him out of active life we owe not the meanest of English poets.

At the age of thirty-two, writing of himself, he says, "I am of a very singular temper, and very unlike all the men that I have ever conversed with. Certainly I am not an absolute fool, but I have more weakness than the greatest of all the fools I can recollect at present. In short, if I was as fit for the next world as I am unfit for this—and God forbid I should speak it in vanity—I would not change conditions with any saint in Christendom." Folly produces nothing good, and if Cowper had been an absolute fool, he would not have written good poetry. But he does not exaggerate his own weakness, and that he should have become a power among men is a remarkable triumph of the influences which have given birth to Christian civilization.

The world into which the child came was one very adverse to him, and at the same time very much in need of him. It was a world from which the spirit of poetry seemed to have fled. There could be no stronger proof of this than the occupation of the throne of Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton by the arch-versifier Pope. The Revolution of 1688 was glorious, but unlike the Puritan Revolution which it followed, and in the political sphere partly ratified, it was profoundly prosaic. Spiritual religion, the source of Puritan grandeur and of the poetry of Milton, was almost extinct; there was not much more of it among the Nonconformists, who had now become to a great extent mere Whigs, with a decided Unitarian tendency. The Church was little better than a political force, cultivated and manipulated by political leaders for their own purposes. The Bishops were either politicians or theological polemics collecting trophies of victory over free-thinkers as titles to higher preferment. The inferior clergy. as a body, were far nearer in character to Trulliber than to Dr. Primrose; coarse, sordid, neglectful of

their duties, shamelessly addicted to sinecurism and pluralities, fanatics in their Toryism and in attachment to their corporate privileges, cold, rationalistic and almost heathen in their preachings, if they preached at all. The society of the day is mirrored in the pictures of Hogarth, in the works of Fielding and Smollett; hard and heartless polish was the best of it; and not a little of it was *Marriage à la Mode*. Chesterfield, with his soulless culture, his court graces, and his fashionable immoralities, was about the highest type of an English gentleman; but the Wilkeses, Potters, and Sandwiches, whose mania for vice culminated in the Hell-fire Club, were more numerous than the Chesterfields. Among the country squires, for one Allworthy or Sir Roger de Coverley there were many Westerns. Among the common people religion was almost extinct, and assuredly no new morality or sentiment, such as Positivists now promise, had taken its place. Sometimes the rustic thought for himself, and scepticism took formal possession of his mind; but, as we see from one of Cowper's letters, it was a coarse scepticism which desired to be buried with its hounds. Ignorance and brutality reigned in the cottage. Drunkenness reigned in palace and cottage alike. Gambling, cock-fighting, and bull-fighting were the amusements of the people. Political life, which, if it had been pure and vigorous, might have made up for the absence of spiritual influences, was corrupt from the top of the scale to the bottom: its effect on national character is pourtrayed in Hogarth's *Election*. That property had its duties as well as its rights, nobody had yet ventured to say or think. The duty of a gentleman towards his own class was to pay his debts of honour and to fight a duel whenever he was challenged by one of his own order; towards the lower class his duty was none. Though the forms of government were elective, and Cowper gives us a description of the candidate at election-time obsequiously soliciting votes, society was intensely aristocratic, and each rank was divided from that below it by a sharp line which precluded brotherhood or sympathy. Says the Duchess of Buckingham to Lady Huntingdon, who had asked her to come and hear Whitefield, "I thank your ladyship for the information concerning the Methodist preachers; their doctrines are most repulsive, and strongly tinctured with disrespect towards their superiors, in perpetually endeavouring to level all ranks and do away with all distinctions. It is monstrous to be told you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting; and I cannot but wonder that your ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding. I shall be most happy to come and hear your favourite preacher." Her Grace's sentiments towards the common wretches that crawl on the earth were shared, we may be sure, by her Grace's waiting-maid. Of humanity there was as little as there was of religion. It was the age of the criminal law which hanged men for petty thefts, of life-long imprisonment for debt, of the stocks and the pillory, of a Temple Bar garnished with the heads of traitors, of the unreformed prison system, of the

press-gang, of unrestrained tyranny and savagery at public schools. That the slave-trade was iniquitous hardly any one suspected; even men who deemed themselves religious took part in it without scruple. But a change was at hand, and a still mightier change was in prospect. At the time of Cowper's birth, John Wesley was twenty-eight, and Whitefield was seventeen. With them the revival of religion was at hand. Johnson, the moral reformer, was twenty-two. Howard was born, and in less than a generation Wilberforce was to come.

When Cowper was six years old his mother died; and seldom has a child, even such a child, lost more, even in a mother. Fifty years after her death he still thinks of her, he says, with love and tenderness every day. Late in his life his cousin, Mrs. Anne Bodham, recalled herself to his remembrance by sending him his mother's picture. "Every creature," he writes, "that has any affinity to my mother is dear to me, and you, the daughter of her brother, are but one remove distant from her; I love you therefore, and love you much, both for her sake and for your own. The world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me as the picture which you have so kindly sent me. I received it the night before last, and received it with a trepidation of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I should have felt had its dear original presented herself to my embraces. I kissed it, and hung it where it is the last object which I see at night, and the first on which I open my eyes in the morning. She died when I completed my sixth year; yet I remember her well, and am an ocular witness of the great fidelity of the copy. I remember, too, a multitude of the maternal tendernesses which I received from her, and which have endeared her memory to me beyond expression. There is in me, I believe, more of the Donne than of the Cowper, and though I love all of both names, and have a thousand reasons to love those of my own name, yet I feel the bond of nature draw me vehemently to your side." As Cowper never married, there was nothing to take the place in his heart which had been left vacant by his mother.

"My mother! when I learn'd that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hover'd thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?
Perhaps thou gav'st me, though unfelt, a kiss;
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss—
Ah, that maternal smile!—it answers—Yes.
I heard the bell toll'd on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
And, turning from my nursery window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
But was it such?—It was.—Where thou art gone
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting word shall pass my lips no more!

Thy maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,
Oft gave me promise of thy quick return.
What ardently I wish'd, I long believed,
And disappointed still, was still deceived;
By expectation every day beguiled,
Dupe of to-morrow even from a child.
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,
Till, all my stock of infant sorrows spent,
I learn'd at last submission to my lot,
But, though I less deplored thee, ne'er forgot."

In the years that followed no doubt he remembered her too well. At six years of age this little mass of timid and quivering sensibility was, in accordance with the cruel custom of the time, sent to a large boarding-school. The change from home to a boarding-school is bad enough now; it was much worse in those days.

"I had hardships," says Cowper, "of various kinds to conflict with, which I felt more sensibly in proportion to the tenderness with which I had been treated at home. But my chief affliction consisted in my being singled out from all the other boys by a lad of about fifteen years of age as a proper object upon whom he might let loose the cruelty of his temper. I choose to conceal a particular recital of the many acts of barbarity with which he made it his business continually to persecute me. It will be sufficient to say that his savage treatment of me impressed such a dread of his figure upon my mind, that I well remember being afraid to lift my eyes upon him higher than to his knees, and that I knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress. May the Lord pardon him, and may we meet in glory!" Cowper charges himself, it may be in the exaggerated style of a self-accusing saint, with having become at school an adept in the art of lying. Southey says this must be a mistake, since at English public schools boys do not learn to lie. But the mistake is on Southey's part; bullying, such as this child endured, while it makes the strong boys tyrants, makes the weak boys cowards, and teaches them to defend themselves by deceit, the fist of the weak. The recollection of this boarding-school mainly it was that at a later day inspired the plea for a home education in *Tirocinium*.

"Then why resign into a stranger's hand
A task as much within your own command,
That God and nature, and your interest too,
Seem with one voice to delegate to you?
Why hire a lodging in a house unknown
For one whose tenderest thoughts all hover round your own?
This second weaning, needless as it is,
How does it lacerate both your heart and his!
The indented stick that loses day by day
Notch after notch, till all are smooth'd away,
Bears witness long ere his dismission come,
With what intense desire he wants his home.
But though the joys he hopes beneath your roof
Bid fair enough to answer in the proof,

Harmless, and safe, and natural as they are,
A disappointment waits him even there:
Arrived, he feels an unexpected change,
He blushes, hangs his head, is shy and strange.
No longer takes, as once, with fearless ease,
His favourite stand between his father's knees,
But seeks the corner of some distant seat,
And eyes the door, and watches a retreat,
And, least familiar where he should be most,
Feels all his happiest privileges lost.
Alas, poor boy!—the natural effect
Of love by absence chill'd into respect."

From the boarding-school, the boy, his eyes being liable to inflammation, was sent to live with an oculist, in whose house he spent two years, enjoying at all events a respite from the sufferings and the evils of the boarding-school. He was then sent to Westminster School, at that time in its glory. That Westminster in those days must have been a scene not merely of hardship, but of cruel suffering and degradation to the younger and weaker boys, has been proved by the researches of the Public Schools Commission. There was an established system and a regular vocabulary of bullying. Yet Cowper seems not to have been so unhappy there as at the private school; he speaks of himself as having excelled at cricket and football; and excellence in cricket and football at a public school generally carries with it, besides health and enjoyment, not merely immunity from bullying, but high social considertion. With all Cowper's delicacy and sensitiveness, he must have had a certain fund of physical strength, or he could hardly have borne the literary labour of his later years, especially as he was subject to the medical treatment of a worse than empirical era. At one time he says, while he was at Westminster, his spirits were so buoyant that he fancied he should never die, till a skull thrown out before him by a grave-digger as he was passing through St. Margaret's churchyard in the night recalled him to a sense of his mortality.

The instruction at a public school in those days was exclusively classical. Cowper was under Vincent Bourne, his portrait of whom is in some respects a picture not only of its immediate subject, but of the school-master of the last century. "I love the memory of Vinny Bourne. I think him a better Latin poet than Tibullus, Propertius, Ausonius, or any of the writers in his way, except Ovid, and not at all inferior to him. I love him too with a love of partiality, because he was usher of the fifth form at Westminster when I passed through it. He was so good-natured and so indolent that I lost more than I got by him, for he made me as idle as himself. He was such a sloven, as if he had trusted to his genius as a cloak for everything that could disgust you in his person; and indeed in his writings he has almost made amends for all. . . . . I remember seeing the Duke of Richmond set fire to his greasy locks, and box his ears to put it out again." Cowper learned, if not to write Latin

verses as well as Vinny Bourne himself, to write them very well, as his Latin versions of some of his own short poems bear witness. Not only so, but he evidently became a good classical scholar, as classical scholarship was in those days, and acquired the literary form of which the classics are the best school. Out of school hours he studied independently, as clever boys under the unexacting rule of the old public schools often did, and read through the whole of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with a friend. He also, probably, picked up at Westminster much of the little knowledge of the world which he ever possessed. Among his school-fellows was Warren Hastings, in whose guilt as proconsul he afterwards, for the sake of Auld Lang Syne, refused to believe, and Impey, whose character has had the ill-fortune to be required as the shade in Macaulay's fancy picture of Hastings.

On leaving Westminster, Cowper, at eighteen, went to live with Mr. Chapman, an attorney, to whom he was articled, being destined for the Law. He chose that profession, he says, not of his own accord, but to gratify an indulgent father, who may have been led into the error by a recollection of the legal honours of the family, as well as by the "silver pence" which his promising son had won by his Latin verses at Westminster School. The youth duly slept at the attorney's house in Ely Place. His days were spent in "giggling and making giggle" with his cousins, Theodora and Harriet, the daughters of Ashley Cowper, in the neighbouring Southampton Row. Ashley Cowper was a very little man, in a white hat lined with yellow, and his nephew used to say that he would one day be picked by mistake for a mushroom. His fellow-clerk in the office, and his accomplice in giggling and making giggle, was one strangely mated with him; the strong, aspiring and unscrupulous Thurlow, who, though fond of pleasure, was at the same time preparing himself to push his way to wealth and power. Cowper felt that Thurlow would reach the summit of ambition while he would himself remain below, and made his friend promise when he was Chancellor to give him something. When Thurlow was Chancellor, he gave Cowper his advice on translating Homer.

At the end of his three years with the attorney, Cowper took chambers in the Middle, from which he afterwards removed to the Inner Temple. The Temple is now a pile of law offices. In those days it was still a Society. One of Cowper's set says of it: "The Temple is the barrier that divides the City and Suburbs; and the gentlemen who reside there seem influenced by the situation of the place they inhabit. Templars are in general a kind of citizen courtiers. They aim at the air and the mien of the drawing-room, but the holy-day smoothness of a 'prentice, heightened with some additional touches of the rake or coxcomb, betrays itself in everything they do. The Temple, however, is stocked with its peculiar beaux, wits, poets, critics, and every character in the gay world; and it is a thousand pities that so pretty a society should be disgraced with a few dull fellows, who can submit to puzzle them-

selves with cases and reports, and have not taste enough to follow the genteel method of studying the law." Cowper, at all events, studied law by the genteel method; he read it almost as little in the Temple as he had in the attorney's office, though in due course of time he was formally called to the Bar, and even managed in some way to acquire a reputation which, when he had entirely given up the profession, brought him a curious offer of a readership at Lyons Inn. His time was given to literature, and he became a member of a little circle of men of letters and journalists which had its social centre in the Nonsense Club, consisting of seven Westminster men who dined together every Thursday. In the set were Bonnell Thornton and Colman, twin wits; fellow-writers of the periodical essays which were the rage in that day; joint proprietors of the *St. James's Chronicle;* contributors both of them to the *Connoisseur;* and translators, Colman of Terence, Bonnell Thornton of Plautus, Colman being a dramatist besides. In the set was Lloyd, another wit and essayist and a poet, with a character not of the best. On the edge of the set, but apparently not in it, was Churchill, who was then running a course which to many seemed meteoric, and of whose verse, sometimes strong but always turbid, Cowper conceived and retained an extravagant admiration. Churchill was a link to Wilkes; Hogarth, too, was an ally of Colman, and helped him in his exhibition of Signs. The set was strictly confined to Westminsters. Gray and Mason, being Etonians, were objects of its literary hostility, and butts of its satire. It is needless to say much about these literary companions of Cowper's youth; his intercourse with them was totally broken off; and before he himself became a poet its effects had been obliterated by madness, entire change of mind, and the lapse of twenty years. If a trace remained, it was in his admiration of Churchill's verses, and in the general results of literary society, and of early practice in composition. Cowper contributed to the *Connoisser* and the *St. James's Chronicle.* His papers in the *Connoisseur* have been preserved; they are mainly imitations of the lighter papers of the *Spectator* by a student who affects the man of the world. He also dallied with poetry, writing verses to "Delia," and an epistle to Lloyd. He had translated an elegy of Tibullus when he was fourteen, and at Westminster he had written an imitation of Phillips's *Splendid Shilling,* which, Southey says, shows his manner formed. He helped his Cambridge brother, John Cowper, in a translation of the *Heriade.* He kept up his classics, especially his Homer. In his letters there are proofs of his familiarity with Rousseau. Two or three ballads which he wrote are lost, but he says they were popular, and we may believe him. Probably they were patriotic. 'When poor Bob White," he says, "brought in the news of Boscawen's success off the Coast of Portugal, how did I leap for joy! When Hawke demolished Conflans, I was still more transported. But nothing could express my rapture when Wolfe made the conquest of Quebec."

The "Delia" to whom Cowper wrote verses was his cousin

Theodora, with whom he had an unfortunate love affair. Her father, Ashley Cowper, forbade their marriage, nominally on the ground of consanguinity; really, as Southey thinks, because he saw Cowper's unfitness for business, and inability to maintain a wife. Cowper felt the disappointment deeply at the time, as well he might do if Theodora resembled her sister, Lady Hesketh. Theodora remained unmarried, and, as we shall see, did not forget her lover. His letters she preserved till her death in extreme old age.

In 1756 Cowper's father died. There does not seem to have been much intercourse between them, nor does the son in after-years speak with any deep feeling of his loss: possibly his complaint in *Tirocinium* of the effect of boarding-schools, in estranging children from their parents, may have had some reference to his own case. His local affections, however, were very strong, and he felt with unusual keenness the final parting from his old home, and the pang of thinking that strangers usurp our dwelling and the familiar places will know us no more.

> "Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
> Children not thine have trod my nursery floor;
> And where the gardener Robin, day by day,
> Drew me to school along the public way,
> Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapp'd
> In scarlet mantle warm and velvet capp'd.
> 'Tis now become a history little known,
> That once we call'd the pastoral house our own."

Before the rector's death, it seems, his pen had hardly realised the cruel frailty of the tenure by which a home in a parsonage is held. Of the family of Burkhampstead Rectory there was now left besides himself only his brother John Cowper, Fellow of Caius College, Cambridge, whose birth had cost their mother's life.

When Cowper was thirty-two, and still living in the Temple, came the sad and decisive crisis of his life. He went mad, and attempted suicide. What was the source of his madness? There is a vague tradition that it arose from licentiousness, which, no doubt, is sometimes the cause of insanity. But in Cowper's case there is no proof of anything of the kind: his confessions, after his conversion, of his own past sinfulness point to nothing worse than general ungodliness and occasional excess in wine; and the tradition derives a colour of probability only from the loose lives of one or two of the wits and Bohemians with whom he had lived. His virtuous love of Theodora was scarcely compatible with low and gross amours. Generally, his madness is said to have been religious, and the blame is laid on the same foe to human weal as that of the sacrifice of Iphigenia. But when he first went mad, his conversion to Evangelicism had not taken place; he had not led a particularly religious life, nor been greatly given to religious practices, though as a clergyman's son he naturally believed in religion, had at times felt religious emotions, and when he found his heart sinking had tried devotional books and prayers. The truth is, his

malady was simple hypochondria, having its source in delicacy of constitution and weakness of digestion. combined with the influence of melancholy surroundings. It had begun to attack him soon after his settlement in his lonely chambers in the Temple, when his pursuits and associations, as we have seen, were far from Evangelical. When its crisis arrived, he was living by himself without any society of the kind that suited him (for the excitement of the Nonsense Club was sure to be followed by reaction); he had lost his love, his father, his home, and, as it happened, also a dear friend; his little patrimony was fast dwindling away; he must have despaired of success in his profession; and his outlook was altogether dark. It yielded to the remedies to which hypochondria usually yields—air, exercise, sunshine, cheerful society, congenial occupation. It came with January and went with May. Its gathering gloom was dispelled for a time by a stroll in fine weather on the hills above Southampton Water, and Cowper said that he was never unhappy for a whole day in the company of Lady Hesketh. When he had become a Methodist, his hypochondria took a religious form, but so did his recovery from hypochondria; both must be set down to the account of his faith, or neither. This double aspect of the matter will plainly appear further on. A votary of wealth, when his brain gives way under disease or age, fancies that he is a beggar. A Methodist, when his brain gives way under the same influences, fancies that he is forsaken of God. In both cases the root of the malady is physical.

In the lines which Cowper sent on his disappointment to Theodora's sister, and which record the sources of his despondency, there is not a touch of religious despair, or of anything connected with religion. The catastrophe was brought on by an incident with which religion had nothing to do. The office of clerk of the Journals in the House of Lords fell vacant, and was in the gift of Cowper's kinsman, Major Cowper, as patentee. Cowper received the nomination. He had longed for the office sinfully, as he afterwards fancied; it would exactly have suited him, and made him comfortable for life. But his mind had by this time succumbed to his malady. His fancy conjured up visions of opposition to the appointment in the House of Lords; of hostility in the office where he had to study the Journals; of the terrors of an examination to be undergone before the frowning peers. After hopelessly poring over the Journals for some months he became quite mad, and his madness took a suicidal form. He has told with unsparing exactness the story of his attempts to kill himself. In his youth his father had unwisely given him a treatise in favour of suicide to read, and when he argued against it, had listened to his reasonings in a silence which he construed as sympathy with the writer, though it seems to have been only unwillingness to think too badly of the state of a departed friend. This now recurred to his mind, and talk with casual companions in taverns and chop-houses was enough in his present condition to confirm him in his belief that self-destruction was lawful. Evidently he was perfectly insane, for he

could not take up a newspaper without reading in it a fancied libel on himself. First he bought laudanum, and had gone out into the fields with the intention of swallowing it, when the love of life suggested another way of escaping the dreadful ordeal. He might sell all he had, fly to France, change his religion, and bury himself in a monastery. He went home to pack up; but while he was looking over his portmanteau, his mood changed, and he again resolved on self-destruction. Taking a coach, he ordered the coachman to drive to the Tower Wharf, intending to throw himself into the river. But the love of life once more interposed, under the guise of a low tide and a porter seated on the quay. Again in the coach, and afterwards in his chambers, he tried to swallow the laudanum; but his hand was paralysed by "the convincing Spirit," aided by seasonable interruptions from the presence of his laundress and her husband, and at length he threw the laudanum away. On the night before the day appointed for the examination before the Lords, he lay some time with the point of his penknife pressed against his heart, but without courage to drive it home. Lastly, he tried to hang himself; and on this occasion he seems to have been saved not by the love of life, or by want of resolution, but by mere accident. He had become insensible, when the garter by which he was suspended broke, and his fall brought in the laundress, who supposed him to be in a fit. He sent her to a friend, to whom he related all that had passed, and despatched him to his kinsman. His kinsman arrived, listened with horror to the story, made more vivid by the sight of the broken garter, saw at once that all thought of the appointment was at end, and carried away the instrument of nomination. Let those whom despondency assails read this passage of Cowper's life, and remember that he lived to write *John Gilpin* and *The Task*.

Cowper tells us that "to this moment he had felt no concern of a spiritual kind;" that "ignorant of original sin, insensible of the guilt of actual transgression, he understood neither the Law nor the Gospel; the condemning nature of the one, nor the restoring mercies of the other." But after attempting suicide he was seized, as he well might be, with religious horrors. Now it was that he began to ask himself whether he had been guilty of the unpardonable sin, and was presently persuaded that he had, though it would be vain to inquire what he imagined the unpardonable sin to be. In this mood, he fancied that if there was any balm for him in Gilead, it would be found in the ministrations of his friend Martin Madan, an Evangelical clergyman of high repute, whom he had been wont to regard as an enthusiast. His Cambridge brother, John, the translator of the *Henriade*, seems to have had some philosophic doubts as to the efficacy of the proposed remedy; but, like a philosopher, he consented to the experiment. Mr. Madan came and ministered, but in that distempered soul his balm turned to poison; his religious conversations only fed the horrible illusion. A set of English Sapphics, written by Cowper at this time, and expressing his despair, were unfortunately preserved; they are a ghastly play of

the poetic faculty in a mind utterly deprived of self-control, and amidst the horrors of inrushing madness. Diabolical they might be termed more truly than religious.

There was nothing for it but a madhouse. The sufferer was consigned to the private asylum of Dr. Cotton, at St. Alban's. An ill-chosen physician Dr. Cotton would have been, if the malady had really had its source in religion; for he was himself a pious man, a writer of hymns, and was in the habit of holding religious intercourse with his patients. Cowper, after his recovery, speaks of that intercourse with the keenest pleasure and gratitude; so that, in the opinion of the two persons best qualified to judge, religion in this case was not the bane. Cowper has given us a full account of his recovery. It was brought about, as we can plainly see, by medical treatment wisely applied; but it came in the form of a burst of religious faith and hope. He rises one morning feeling better; grows cheerful over his breakfast, takes up the Bible, which in his fits of madness he always threw aside, and turns to a verse in the Epistle to the Romans. "Immediately I received strength to believe, and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made, my pardon in His blood, and the fulness and completeness of His justification. In a moment I believed and received the Gospel." Cotton at first mistrusted the sudden change; but he was at length satisfied, pronounced his patient cured, and discharged him from the asylum, after a detention of eighteen months. Cowper hymned his deliverance in *The Happy Change*, as in the hideous Sapphics he had given religious utterance to his despair.

"The soul, a dreary province once
Of Satan's dark domain,
Feels a new empire form'd within,
And owns a heavenly reign.

"The glorious orb whose golden beams
The fruitful year control,
Since first obedient to Thy word,
He started from the goal,

"Has cheer'd the nations with the joys
His orient rays impart;
But, Jesus, 'tis Thy light alone
Can shine upon the heart."

Once for all, the reader of Cowper's life must make up his mind to acquiesce in religious forms of expression. If he does not sympathise with them, he will recognise them as phenomena of opinion, and bear them like a philosopher. He can easily translate them into the language of psychology, or even of physiology, if he thinks fit.

CHAPTER II.

AT HUNTINGDON—THE UNWINS.

THE storm was over; but it had swept away a great part of Cowper's scanty fortune, and almost all his friends. At thirty-five he was stranded and desolate. He was obliged to resign a Commissionership of Bankruptcy which he held, and little seems to have remained to him but the rent of his chambers in the Temple. A return to his profession was, of course, out of the question. His relations, however, combined to make up a little income for him, though from a hope of his family, he had become a melancholy disappointment; even the Major contributing, in spite of the rather trying incident of the nomination. His brother was kind, and did a brother's duty, but there does not seem to have been much sympathy between them; John Cowper did not become a convert to Evangelical doctrine till he was near his end, and he was incapable of sharing William's spiritual emotions. Of his brilliant companions, the Bonnell Thorntons and the Colmans, the quondam members of the Nonsense Club, he heard no more, till he had himself become famous. But he still had a staunch friend in a less brilliant member of the club, Joseph Hill, the lawyer, evidently a man who united strong sense and depth of character with literary tastes and love of fun, and who was throughout Cowper's life his Mentor in matters of business, with regard to which he was himself a child. He had brought with him from the asylum at St. Alban's the servant who had attended him there, and who had been drawn by the singular talisman of personal attraction which partly made up to this frail and helpless being for his entire lack of force. He had also brought from the same place an outcast boy whose case had excited his interest, and for whom he afterwards provided by putting him to a trade. The maintenance of these two retainers was expensive, and led to grumbling among the subscribers to the family subsidy, the Major especially threatening to withdraw his contribution. While the matter was in agitation, Cowper received an anonymous letter couched in the kindest terms, bidding him not distress himself, for that whatever deduction from his income might be made, the loss would be supplied by one who loved him tenderly and approved his conduct. In a letter to Lady Hesketh, he says that he wishes he knew who dictated this letter, and that he had seen not long before a style excessively like it. He can scarcely have failed to guess that it came from Theodora.

It is due to Cowper to say that he accepts the assistance of his relatives, and all acts of kindness done to him, with sweet and be-

coming thankfulness; and that whatever dark fancies he may have had about his religious state, when the evil spirit was upon him, he always speaks with contentment and cheerfulness of his earthly lot. Nothing splenetic, no element of suspicious and irritable self-love entered into the composition of his character.

On his release from the asylum he was taken in hand by his brother John, who first tried to find lodgings for him at or near Cambridge, and, failing in this, placed him at Huntingdon, within a long ride, so that William becoming a horseman for the purpose, the brothers could meet once a week. Huntingdon was a quiet little town with less than two thousand inhabitants, in a dull country, the best part of which was the Ouse, especially to Cowper, who was fond of bathing. Life there, as in other English country towns in those days, and, indeed, till railroads made people everywhere too restless and migratory for companionship, or even for acquaintance, was sociable in an unrefined way. There were assemblies, dances, races, card-parties, and a bowling-green, at which the little world met and enjoyed itself. From these the new convert, in his spiritual ecstasy, of course turned away as mere modes of murdering time. Three families received him with civility, two of them with cordiality; but the chief acquaintances he made were with "odd scrambling fellows like himself;" an eccentric water-drinker and vegetarian who was to be met by early risers and walkers every morning at six o'clock by his favourite spring; a char-parson, of the class common in those days of sinecurism and non-residence, who walked sixteen miles every Sunday to serve two churches, besides reading daily prayers at Huntingdon, and who regaled his friend with ale brewed by his own hands. In his attached servant the recluse boasted that he had a friend; a friend he might have, but hardly a companion.

For the first days, and even weeks, however, Huntingdon seemed a paradise. The heart of its new inhabitant was full of the unspeakable happiness that comes with calm after storm, with health after the most terrible of maladies, with repose after the burning fever of the brain. When first he went to church, he was in a spiritual ecstasy; it was with difficulty that he restrained his emotions; though his voice was silent, being stopped by the intensity of his feelings, his heart within him sang for joy; and when the Gospel for the day was read, the sound of it was more than he could well bear. This brightness of his mind communicated itself to all the objects round him—to the sluggish waters of the Ouse, to dull, fenny Huntingdon, and to its commonplace inhabitants.

For about three months his cheerfulness lasted, and with the help of books, and his rides to meet his brother, he got on pretty well; but then "the communion which he had so long been able to maintain with the Lord was suddenly interrupted." This is his theological version of the case; the rationalistic version immediately follows: "I began to dislike my solitary situation, and to fear I should never be able to weather out the winter in so lonely a dwelling." No man could be less fitted to bear a lonely life; per-

sistence in the attempt would soon have brought back his madness. He was longing for a home: and a home was at hand to receive him. It was not, perhaps, one of the happiest kind; but the influence which detracted from its advantages was the one which rendered it hospitable to the wanderer. If Christian piety was carried to a morbid excess beneath its roof, Christian charity opened its door.

The religious revival was now in full career, with Wesley for its chief apostle, organiser, and dictator; Whitefield for its great preacher; Fletcher of Madeley for its typical saint; Lady Huntingdon for its patroness among the aristocracy, and the chief of its "devout women." From the pulpit, but still more from the stand of the field-preacher and through a well-trained army of social propagandists, it was assailing the scepticism, the coldness, the frivolity, the vices of the age. English society was deeply stirred; multitudes were converted, while among those who were not converted violent and sometimes cruel antagonism was aroused. The party had two wings—the Evangelicals, people of the wealthier class or clergymen of the Church of England, who remained within the Establishment; and the Methodists, people of the lower middle class or peasants, the personal converts and followers of Wesley and Whitefield, who, like their leaders, without a positive secession, soon found themselves organising a separate spiritual life in the freedom of Dissent. In the early stages of the movement the Evangelicals were to be counted at most by hundreds, the Methodists by hundreds of thousands. So far as the masses were concerned, it was, in fact, a preaching of Christianity anew. There was a cross division of the party into the Calvinists and those whom the Calvinists called Arminians; Wesley belonging to the latter section, while the most pronounced and vehement of the Calvinists was "the fierce Toplady." As a rule, the darker and sterner element, that which delighted in religious terrors and threatenings was Calvinist, the milder and gentler, that which preached a gospel of love and hope continued to look up to Wesley, and to bear with him the reproach of being Arminian.

It is needless to enter into a minute description of Evangelicism and Methodism; they are not things of the past. If Evangelicism has now been reduced to a narrow domain by the advancing forces of Ritualism on one side, and of Rationalism on the other, Methodism is still the great Protestant Church, especially beyond the Atlantic. The spiritual fire which they have kindled, the character which they have produced, the moral reforms which they have wrought, the works of charity and philanthropy to which they have given birth, are matters not only of recent memory, but of present experience. Like the great Protestant revivals which had preceded them in England, like the Moravian revival on the Continent, to which they were closely related, they sought to bring the soul into direct communion with its Maker, rejecting the intervention of a priesthood or a sacramental system. Unlike the previous revivals in England, they warred not against the rulers of the Church or

State, but only against vice or irreligion. Consequently, in the characters which they produced, as compared with those produced by Wycliffism, by the Reformation, and notably by Puritanism, there was less of force and the grandeur connected with it, more of gentleness, mysticism, and religious love. Even Quietism, or something like it, prevailed, especially among the Evangelicals, who were not like the Methodists, engaged in framing a new organisation or in wrestling with the barbarous vices of the lower order. No movement of the kind has ever been exempt from drawbacks and follies, from extravagance, exaggeration, breaches of good taste in religious matters, unctuousness, and cant—from chimerical attempts to get rid of the flesh and live an angelic life on earth—from delusions about special providences and miracles—from a tendency to overvalue doctrine and undervalue duty—from arrogant assumption of spiritual authority by leaders and preachers—from the self-righteousness which fancies itself the object of a divine election, and looks out with a sort of religious complacency from the Ark of Salvation in which it fancies itself securely placed, upon the drowning of an unregenerate world. Still, it will hardly be doubted that in the effects produced by Evangelicism and Methodism the good has outweighed the evil. Had Jansenism prospered as well, France might have had more of reform and less of revolution. The poet of the movement will not be condemned on account of his connexion with it, any more than Milton is condemned on account of his connexion with Puritanism, provided it be found that he also served art well.

Cowper, as we have seen, was already converted. In a letter written at this time to Lady Hesketh, he speaks of himself with great humility "as a convert made in Bedlam, who is more likely to be a stumbling-block to others than to advance their faith," though he adds, with reason enough, "that he who can ascribe an amendment of life and manners, and a reformation of the heart itself, to madness, is guilty of an absurdity that in any other case would fasten the imputation of madness upon himself." It is hence to be presumed that he traced his conversion to his spiritual intercourse with the Evangelical physician of St. Alban's, though the seed sown by Martin Madan may, perhaps, also have sprung up in his heart when the more propitious season arrived. However that may have been, the two great factors of Cowper's life were the malady which consigned him to poetic seclusion and the conversion to Evangelicism, which gave him his inspiration and his theme.

At Huntingdon dwelt the Rev. William Unwin, a clergyman, taking pupils, his wife, much younger than himself, and their son and daughter. It was a typical family of the Revival. Old Mr. Unwin is described by Cowper as a Parson Adams. The son, William Unwin, was preparing for holy orders. He was a man of some mark, and received tokens of intellectual respect from Paley, though he is best known as the friend to whom many of Cowper's letters are addressed. He it was who, struck by the appearance of the stranger, sought an opportunity of making his acquaintance.

He found one, after morning church, when Cowper was taking his solitary walk beneath the trees. Under the influence of religious sympathy the acquaintance quickly ripened into friendship; Cowper at once became one of the Unwin circle, and soon afterward, a vacancy being made by the departure of one of the pupils, he became a boarder in the house. This position he had passionately desired on religious grounds; but in truth, he might well have desired it on economical grounds also, for he had begun to experience the difficulty and expensiveness, as well as the loneliness, of bachelor housekeeping, and financial deficit was evidently before him. To Mrs. Unwin he was from the first strongly drawn. "I met Mrs. Unwin in the street," he says, "and went home with her. She and I walked together near two hours in the garden, and had a conversation which did me more good than I should have received from an audience with the first prince in Europe. That woman is a blessing to me, and I never see her without being the better for her company." Mrs. Unwin's character is written in her portrait with its prim but pleasant features; a Puritan and a precisian she was; but she was not morose or sour, and she had a boundless capacity for affection. Lady Hesketh, a woman of the world, and a good judge in every respect, says of her at a later period, when she had passed with Cowper through many sad and trying years: "She is very far from grave; on the contrary, she is cheerful and gay, and laughs *de bon cœur* upon the smallest provocation. Amidst all the little puritanical words which fall from her *de temps en temps*, she seems to have by nature a quiet fund of gaiety; great indeed must it have been, not to have been wholly overcome by the close confinement in which she has lived, and the anxiety she must have undergone for one whom she certainly loves as well as one human being can love another. I will not say she idolizes him, because that she would think wrong; but she certainly seems to possess the truest regard and affection for this excellent creature, and, as I said before, has in the most literal sense of those words, no will or shadow of inclination but what is his. My account of Mrs. Unwin may seem, perhaps, to you, on comparing my letters, contradictory; but when you consider that I began to write at the first moment that I saw her, you will not wonder. Her character develops itself by degrees; and though I might lead you to suppose her grave and melancholy, she is not so by any means. When she speaks upon grave subjects, she does express herself with a puritanical tone, and in puritanical expressions, but on all subjects she seems to have a great disposition to cheerfulness and mirth; and, indeed, had she not, she could not have gone through all she has. I must say, too, that she seems to be very well read in the English poets, as appears by several little quotations, which she makes from time to time, and has a true taste for what is excellent in that way."

When Cowper became an author he paid the highest respect to Mrs. Unwin as an instinctive critic, and called her his Lord Chamberlain, whose approbation was his sufficient licence for publication.

Life in the Unwin family is thus described by the new inmate:

—"As to amusements—I mean what the world calls such—we have none. The place, indeed, swarms with them; and cards and dancing are the professed business of almost all the *gentle* inhabitants of Huntingdon. We refuse to take part in them, or to be accessories to this way of murdering our time, and by so doing have acquired the name of Methodists. Having told you how we *do not* spend our time, I will next say how we do. We breakfast commonly between eight and nine; till eleven, we read either the Scripture, or the sermons of some faithful preacher of those holy mysteries; at eleven we attend divine service, which is performed here twice every day; and from twelve to three we separate, and amuse ourselves as we please. During that interval, I either read in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner, but if the weather permits, adjourn to the garden, where, with Mrs. Unwin and her son, I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea-time. If it rains or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors or sing some hymns of Martin's collection, and by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts, I hope, are the best performers. After tea we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs. Unwin is a good walker, and we have generally travelled about four miles before we see home again. When the days are short we make this excursion in the former part of the day, between church time and dinner. At night we read and converse as before till supper, and commonly finish the evening either with hymns or a sermon, and last of all the family are called to prayers. I need not tell you that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness; accordingly, we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren."

Mrs. Cowper, the wife of Major (now Colonel) Cowper, to whom this was written, was herself strongly Evangelical; Cowper had, in fact, unfortunately for him, turned from his other relations and friends to her on that account. She, therefore, would have no difficulty in thinking that such a life was consistent with cheerfulness, but ordinary readers will ask how it could fail to bring on another fit of hypochondria. The answer is probably to be found in the last words of the passage. Overstrained and ascetic piety found an antidote in affection. The Unwins were Puritans and enthusiasts, but their household was a picture of domestic love.

With the name of Mrs. Cowper is connected an incident which occurred at this time, and which illustrates the propensity to self-inspection and self-revelation which Cowper had in common with Rousseau. Huntingdon, like other little towns, was all eyes and gossip; the new-comer was a mysterious stranger who kept himself aloof from the general society, and he naturally became the mark for a little stone-throwing. Young Unwin happening to be passing near "the Park" on his way from London to Huntingdon, Cowper gave him an introduction to its lady, in a letter to whom he afterwards disclosed his secret motive. "My dear Cousin,—You sent my friend Unwin home to us charmed with

your kind reception of him, and with everything he saw at the Park. Shall I once more give you a peep into my vile and deceitful heart? What motive do you think lay at the bottom of my conduct when I desired him to call upon you? I did not suspect, at first, that pride and vainglory had any share in it; but quickly after I had recommended the visit to him, I discovered, in that fruitful soil, the very root of the matter. You know I am a stranger here; all such are suspected characters, unless they bring their credentials with them. To this moment, I believe, it is a matter of speculation in the place, whence I came, and to whom I belong. Though my friend, you may suppose, before I was admitted an inmate here, was satisfied that I was not a mere vagabond, and has, since that time, received more convincing proofs of my *sponsibility;* yet I could not resist the opportunity of furnishing him with ocular demonstration of it, by introducing him to one of my most splendid connexions; that when he hears me called 'that fellow Cowper,' which has happened heretofore, he may be able, upon unquestionable evidence, to assert my gentlemanhood, and relieve me from the weight of that opprobrious appellation. Oh, pride! pride! it deceives with the subtlety of a serpent, and seems to walk erect, though it crawls upon the earth. How will it twist and twine itself about to get from under the Cross, which it is the glory of our Christian calling to be able to bear with patience and good-will. They who can guess at the heart of a stranger,—and you especially, who are of a compassionate temper,—will be more ready, perhaps, to excuse me, in this instance, than I can be to excuse myself. But, in good truth, it was abominable pride of heart, indignation, and vanity, and deserves no better name."

Once more, however obsolete Cowper's belief, and the language in which he expresses it may have become for many of us, we must take it as his philosophy of life. At this time, at all events, it was a source of happiness. "The storm being passed, a quiet and peaceful serenity of soul succeeded;" and the serenity in this case was unquestionably produced in part by faith.

> "I was a stricken deer that left the herd
> Long since; with many an arrow deep infixed
> My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
> To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
> There was I found by one who had himself
> Been hurt by the archers. In his side he bore,
> And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars,
> With gentle force soliciting the darts,
> He drew them forth and healed and bade me live."

Cowper thought for a moment of taking orders, but his dread of appearing in public conspired with the good sense which lay beneath his excessive sensibility to put a veto on the design. He, however, exercised the zeal of a neophyte in proselytism to a greater extent than his own judgment and good taste approved when his enthusiasm had calmed down.

CHAPTER III.

AT OLNEY—MR. NEWTON.

COWPER had not been two years with the Unwins when Mr. Unwin, the father, was killed by a fall from his horse; this broke up the household. But between Cowper and Mrs. Unwin an indissoluble tie had been formed. It seems clear, notwithstanding Southey's assertion to the contrary, that they at one time meditated marriage, possibly as a propitiation to the evil tongues which did not spare even this most innocent connexion; but they were prevented from fulfilling their intention by a return of Cowper's malady. They became companions for life. Cowper says they were as mother and son to each other; but Mrs. Unwin was only seven years older than he. To label their connexion is impossible, and to try to do it would be a platitude. In his poems Cowper calls Mrs. Unwin Mary; she seems always to have called him Mr. Cowper. It is evident that her son, a strictly virtuous and religious man, never had the slightest misgiving about his mother's position.

The pair had to choose a dwelling-place; they chose Olney, in Buckinghamshire, on the Ouse. The Ouse was "a slow winding river," watering low meadows, from which crept pestilential fogs. Olney was a dull town, or rather village, inhabited by a population of lace-makers, ill-paid, fever-stricken, and for the most part as brutal as they were poor. There was not a woman in the place, excepting Mrs. Newton, with whom Mrs. Unwin could associate, or to whom she could look for help in sickness or other need. The house in which the pair took up their abode was dismal, prison-like, and tumble-down; when they left it, the competitors for the succession were a cobbler and a publican. It looked upon the Market-place, but it was in the close neighbourhood of Silver End, the worst part of Olney. In winter the cellars were full of water. There were no pleasant walks within easy reach, and in winter Cowper's only exercise was pacing thirty yards of gravel, with the dreary supplement of dumb-bells. What was the attraction to this "well," this "abyss," as Cowper himself called it, and as, physically and socially, it was?

The attraction was the presence of the Rev. John Newton, then curate of Olney. The vicar was Moses Brown, an Evangelical and a religious writer, who has even deserved a place among the worthies of the revival; but a family of thirteen children, some of

whom it appears too closely resembled the sons of Eli, had compelled him to take advantage of the indulgent character of the ecclesiastical polity of those days by becoming a pluralist and a non-resident, so that the curate had Olney to himself. The patron was the Lord Dartmouth, who, as Cowper says, "wore a coronet and prayed." John Newton was one of the shining lights and foremost leaders and preachers of the revival. His name was great both in the Evangelical churches within the pale of the Establishment, and in the Methodist churches without it. He was a brand plucked from the very heart of the burning. We have a memoir of his life, partly written by himself, in the form of letters, and completed under his superintendence. It is a monument of the age of Smollett and Wesley, not less characteristic than is Cellini's memoir of the times in which he lived. His father was master of a vessel, and took him to sea when he was eleven. His mother was a pious Dissenter, who was at great pains to store his mind with religious thoughts and pieces. She died when he was young, and his stepmother was not pious. He began to drag his religious anchor, and at length, having read Shaftesbury, left his theological moorings altogether, and drifted into a wide sea of ungodliness, blasphemy, and recklessness of living. Such at least is the picture drawn by the sinner saved of his own earlier years. While still but a stripling he fell desperately in love with a girl of thirteen; his affection for her was as constant as it was romantic; through all his wanderings and sufferings he never ceased to think of her, and after seven years she became his wife. His father frowned on the engagement, and he became estranged from home. He was impressed; narrowly escaped shipwreck, deserted, and was arrested and flogged as a deserter. Released from the navy, he was taken into the service of a slave-dealer on the coast of Africa, at whose hands, and those of the man's negro mistress, he endured every sort of ill-treatment and contumely, being so starved that he was fain sometimes to devour raw roots to stay his hunger. His constitution must have been of iron to carry him through all that he endured. In the meantime his indomitable mind was engaged in attempts at self-culture; he studied a Euclid which he had brought with him, drawing his diagrams on the sand; and he afterwards managed to teach himself Latin by means of a Horace and a Latin Bible, aided by some slight vestiges of the education which he had received at a grammar school. His conversion was brought about by the continued influences of Thomas à Kempis, of a very narrow escape, after terrible sufferings, from shipwreck, of the impression made by the sights of the mighty deep on a soul which, in its weather-beaten casing, had retained its native sensibility, and, we may safely add, of the disregarded but not forgotten teachings of his pious mother. Providence was now kind to him; he became captain of a slave-ship, and made several voyages on the business of trade. That it was a wicked trade he seems to have had no idea; he says he never knew sweeter or more frequent hours of divine communion than on his two last

voyages to Guinea. Afterwards it occurred to him that though his employment was genteel and profitable, it made him a sort of gaoler, unpleasantly conversant with both chains and shackles; and he besought Providence to fix him in a more humane calling.

In answer to his prayer came a fit of apoplexy, which made it dangerous for him to go to sea again. He obtained an office in the port of Liverpool, but soon he set his heart on becoming a minister of the Church of England. He applied for ordination to the Archbishop of York, but not having the degree required by the rules of the Establishment, he received through his Grace's secretary "the softest refusal imaginable." The Archbishop had not had the advantage of perusing Lord Macaulay's remarks on the difference between the policy of the Church of England and that of the Church of Rome, with regard to the utilization of religious enthusiasts. In the end Newton was ordained by the Bishop of Lincoln, and threw himself with the energy of a new-born apostle upon the irreligion and brutality of Olney. No Carthusian's breast could glow more intensely with the zeal which is the offspring of remorse. Newton was a Calvinist, of course, though it seems not an extreme one; otherwise he would probably have confirmed Cowper in the darkest of hallucinations. His religion was one of mystery and miracle, full of sudden conversions, special providences, and satanic visitations. He himself says that "his name was up about the country for preaching people mad;" it is true that in the eyes of the profane Methodism itself was madness; but he goes on to say "whether it is owing to the sedentary life the women live here, poring over their (lace) pillows for ten or twelve hours every day, and breathing confined air in their crowded little rooms, or whatever may be the immediate cause, I suppose we have near a dozen in different degrees disordered in their heads, and most of them I believe truly gracious people." He surmises that "these things are permitted in judgment, that they who seek occasion for cavilling and stumbling may have what they want." Nevertheless there were in him not only force, courage, burning zeal for doing good, but great kindness, and even tenderness of heart. "I see in this world," he said, "two heaps of human happiness and misery; now, if I can take but the smallest bit from one heap and add it to the other, I carry a point —if, as I go home, a child has dropped a half-penny, and by giving it another I can wipe away its tears, I feel I have done something." There was even in him a strain, if not of humour, of a shrewdness which was akin to it, and expressed itself in many pithy sayings. "If two angels came down from heaven to execute a divine command, and one was appointed to conduct an empire and the other to sweep a street in it, they would feel no inclination to change employments." "A Christian should never plead spirituality for being a sloven; if he be but a shoe-cleaner, he should be the best in the parish." "My principal method for defeating heresy is by establishing truth. One proposes to fill a bushel with tares; now if I can fill it first with wheat, I shall defy his attempts." That his

Calvinism was not very dark or sulphureous, seems to be shown from his repeating with gusto the saying of one of the old women of Olney when some preacher dwelt on the doctrine of predestination—"Ah, I have long settled that point; for if God had not chosen me before I was born, I am sure he would have seen nothing to have chosen me for afterwards." That he had too much sense to take mere profession for religion appears from his describing the Calvinists of Olney as of two sorts, which reminded him of the two baskets of Jeremiah's figs. The iron constitution which had carried him through so many hardships enabled him to continue in his ministry to extreme old age. A friend at length counselled him to stop before he found himself stopped by being able to speak no longer. "I cannot stop," he said, raising his voice. "What! shall the old African blasphemer stop while he can speak?"

At the instance of a common friend, Newton had paid Mrs. Unwin a visit at Huntingdon, after her husband's death, and had at once established the ascendency of a powerful character over her and Cowper. He now beckoned the pair to his side, placed them in the house adjoining his own, and opened a private door between the two gardens, so as to have his spiritual children always beneath his eye. Under this, in the most essential respect, unhappy influence, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin together entered on "a decided course of Christian happiness;" that is to say, they spent all their days in a round of religious exercises without relaxation or relief. On fine summer evenings, as the sensible Lady Hesketh saw with dismay, instead of a walk, there was a prayer-meeting. Cowper himself was made to do violence to his intense shyness by leading in prayer. He was also made to visit the poor at once on spiritual missions, and on that of almsgiving, for which Thornton, the religious philanthropist, supplied Newton and his disciples with means. This, which Southey appears to think about the worst part of Newton's regimen, was probably its redeeming feature. The effect of doing good to others on any mind was sure to be good; and the sight of real suffering was likely to banish fancied ills. Cowper in this way gained, at all events, a practical knowledge of the poor, and learned to do them justice, though from a rather too theological point of view. Seclusion from the sinful world was as much a part of the system of Mr. Newton as it was of the system of Saint Benedict. Cowper was almost entirely cut off from intercourse with his friends and people of his own class. He dropped his correspondence even with his beloved cousin, Lady Hesketh, and would probably have dropped his correspondence with Hill, had not Hill's assistance in money matters been indispensable. To complete his mental isolation, it appears that, having sold his library, he had scarcely any books. Such a course of Christian happiness as this could only end in one way; and Newton himself seems to have had the sense to see that a storm was brewing, and that there was no way of conjuring it but by contriving some more congenial occupation. So the disciple

was commanded to employ his poetical gifts in contributing to a hymn-book which Newton was compiling. Cowper's Olney hymns have not any serious value as poetry. Hymns rarely have. The relations of man with Deity transcend and repel poetical treatment. There is nothing in them on which the creative imagination can be exercised. Hymns can be little more than incense of the worshipping soul. Those of the Latin Church are the best; not because they are better poetry than the rest (for they are not), but because their language is the most sonorous. Cowper's hymns were accepted by the religious body for which they were written, as expressions of its spiritual feeling and desires; so far they were successful. They are the work of a religious man of culture, and free from anything wild, erotic, or unctuous. But, on the other hand, there is nothing in them suited to be the vehicle of lofty devotion; nothing, that we can conceive a multitude, or even a prayer-meeting, uplifting to heaven with voice and heart. Southey has pointed to some passages on which the shadow of the advancing malady falls; but in the main there is a predominance of religious joy and hope. The most despondent hymn of the series is *Temptation*, the thought of which resembles that of *The Castaway*.

Cowper's melancholy may have been aggravated by the loss of his only brother, who died about this time, and at whose death-bed he was present; though in the narrative which he wrote, joy at John's conversion and the religious happiness of his end seems to exclude the feelings by which hypochondria was likely to be fed. But his mode of life under Newton was enough to account for the return of his disease, which in this sense may be fairly laid to the charge of religion. He again went mad, fancied, as before, that he was rejected of Heaven, ceased to pray as one helplessly doomed, and again attempted suicide. Newton and Mrs. Unwin at first treated the disease as a diabolical visitation, and "with deplorable consistency," to borrow the phrase used by one of their friends in the case of Cowper's desperate abstinence from prayer, abstained from calling in a physician. Of this, again, their religion must bear the reproach. In other respects they behaved admirably. Mrs. Unwin, shut up for sixteen months with her unhappy partner, tended him with unfailing love; alone she did it, for he could bear no one else about him; though, to make her part more trying, he had conceived the insane idea that she hated him. Seldom has a stronger proof been given of the sustaining power of affection. Assuredly, of whatever Cowper may have afterwards done for his kind, a great part must be set down to the credit of Mrs. Unwin.

"Mary! I want a lyre with other strings,
  Such aid from heaven as some have feigned they drew,
  An eloquence scarce given to mortals, new
And undebased by praise of meaner things,
That, ere through age or woe I shed my wings,
  I may record thy worth with honour due,
  In verse as musical as thou art true,
And that immortalises whom it sings.

But thou hast little need. There is a book
By seraphs writ with beams of heavenly light,
On which the eyes of God not rarely look,
A chronicle of actions just and bright;
There all thy deeds, my faithful Mary, shine,
And, since thou own'st that praise, I spare thee mine."

Newton's friendship, too, was sorely tried. In the midst of the malady the lunatic took it into his head to transfer himself from his own house to the Vicarage, which he obstinately refused to leave; and Newton bore this infliction for several months without repining, though he might well pray earnestly for his friend's deliverance. "The Lord has numbered the days in which I am appointed to wait on him in this dark valley, and he has given us such a love to him, both as a believer and a friend, that I am not weary; but to be sure his deliverance would be to me one of the greatest blessings my thoughts can conceive." Dr. Cotton was at last called in, and under his treatment, evidently directed against a bodily disease, Cowper was at length restored to sanity.

Newton once compared his own walk in the world to that of a physician going through Bedlam. But he was not skilful in his treatment of the literally insane. He thought to cajole Cowper out of his cherished horrors by calling his attention to a case resembling his own. The case was that of Simon Browne, a Dissenter, who had conceived the idea that, being under the displeasure of Heaven, he had been entirely deprived of his rational being and left with merely his animal nature. He had accordingly resigned his ministry, and employed himself in compiling a dictionary, which, he said, was doing nothing that could require a reasonable soul. He seems to have thought that theology fell under the same category, for he proceeded to write some theological treatises, which he dedicated to Queen Caroline, calling her Majesty's attention to the singularity of the authorship as the most remarkable phenomenon of her reign. Cowper, however, instead of falling into the desired train of reasoning, and being led to suspect the existence of a similar illusion in himself, merely rejected the claim of the pretended rival in spiritual affliction, declaring his own case to be far the more deplorable of the two.

Before the decided course of Christian happiness had time again to culminate in madness, fortunately for Cowper, Newton left Olney for St. Mary Woolnoth. He was driven away at last by a quarrel with his barbarous parishioners, the cause of which did him credit. A fire broke out at Olney, and burnt a good many of its straw-thatched cottages. Newton ascribed the extinction of the fire rather to prayer than water, but he took the lead in practical measures of relief, and tried to remove the earthly cause of such visitations by putting an end to bonfires and illuminations on the 5th of November. Threatened with the loss of their Guy Fawkes, the barbarians rose upon him, and he had a narrow escape from their violence. We are reminded of the case of Cotton Mather,

who, after being a leader in witch-burning, nearly sacrificed his life in combatting the fanaticism which opposed itself to the introduction of inoculation. Let it always be remembered that besides its theological side, the Revival had its philanthropic and moral side; that it abolished the slave-trade, and at last slavery; that it waged war, and effective war, under the standard of the gospel, upon masses of vice and brutality, which had been totally neglected by the torpor of the Establishment; that among large classes of the people it was the great civilising agency of the time.

Newton was succeeded as curate of Olney by his disciple, and a man of somewhat the same cast of mind and character, Thomas Scott, the writer of the *Commentary on the Bible* and *The Force of Truth*. To Scott Cowper seems not to have greatly taken. He complains that, as a preacher, he is always scolding the congregation. Perhaps Newton had foreseen that it would be so, for he specially commended the spiritual son whom he was leaving to the care of the Rev. William Bull, of the neighbouring town of Newport Pagnell, a dissenting minister, but a member of a spiritual connexion which did not stop at the line of demarcation between Nonconformity and the Establishment. To Bull Cowper did greatly take; he extols him as "aDissenter, but a liberal one," a man of letters and of genius, master of a fine imagination—or, rather, not master of it—and addresses him as *Carissime Taurorum*. It is rather singular that Newton should have given himself such a successor. Bull was a great smoker, and had made himself a cozy and secluded nook in his garden for the enjoyment of his pipe. He was probably something of a spiritual as well as of a physical Quietist, for he set Cowper to translate the poetry of the great exponent of Quietism, Madame Guyon. The theme of all the pieces which Cowper has translated is the same—Divine Love and the raptures of the heart that enjoys it—the blissful union of the drop with the Ocean—the Evangelical Nirvana. If this line of thought was not altogether healthy, or conducive to the vigorous performance of practical duty, it was, at all events, better than the dark fancy of Reprobation. In his admiration of Madame Guyon, her translator showed his affinity, and that of Protestants of the same school, to Fénelon and the Evangelical element which has lurked in the Roman Catholic church since the days of Thomas à Kempis.

CHAPTER IV.

AUTHORSHIP—THE MORAL SATIRES.

SINCE his recovery, Cowper had been looking out for what he most needed, a pleasant occupation. He tried drawing, carpentering, gardening. Of gardening he had always been fond; and he understood it, as shown by the loving though somewhat "stercoraceous" minuteness of some passages in *The Task*. A little greenhouse, used as a parlour in summer, where he sat surrounded by beauty and fragrance, and lulled by pleasant sounds, was another product of the same pursuit, and seems almost Elysian in that dull, dark life. He also found amusement in keeping tame hares, and he fancied that he had reconciled the hare to man and dog. His three tame hares are among the canonised pets of literature, and they were to his genius what "Sailor" was to the genius of Byron. But Mrs. Unwin, who had terrible reason for studying his case, saw that the thing most wanted was congenial employment for the mind, and she incited him to try his hand at poetry on a larger scale. He listened to her advice, and when he was nearly fifty years of age became a poet. He had acquired the faculty of verse-writing, as we have seen; he had even to some extant formed his manner when he was young. Age must by this time have quenched his fire, and tamed his imagination, so that the didactic style would suit him best. In the length of the interval between his early poems and his great work he resembles Milton; but widely different in the two cases had been the current of the intervening years.

Poetry written late in life is of course, free from youthful crudity and extravagance. It also escapes the youthful tendency to imitation. Cowper's authorship is ushered in by Southey with a history of English poetry; but this is hardly in place; Cowper had little connexion with anything before him. Even his knowledge of poetry was not great. In his youth he had read the great poets, and had studied Milton especially with the ardour of intense admiration. Nothing ever made him so angry as Johnson's Life of Milton. "Oh!" he cries, "I could thrash his old jacket till I made his pension jingle in his pocket." Churchill had made a great —far too great—an impression on him when he was a Templar. Of Churchill, if of anybody, he must be regarded as a follower,

though only in his earlier and less successful poems. In expression he always regarded as a model the neat and gay simplicity of Prior. But so little had he kept up his reading of anything but sermons and hymns, that he learned for the first time from Johnson's Lives the existence of Collins. He is the offspring of the Religious Revival rather than of any school of art. His most important relation to any of his predecessors is, in fact, one of antagonism to the hard glitter of Pope.

In urging her companion to write poetry, Mrs. Unwin was on the right path; her puritanism led her astray in the choice of a theme. She suggested *The Progress of Error* as a subject for a "Moral Satire." It was unhappily adopted, and *The Progress of Error* was followed by *Truth*, *Table Talk*, *Expostulation*, *Hope*, *Charity*, *Conversation*, and *Retirement*. When the series was published, *Table Talk* was put first, being supposed to be the lightest and the most attractive to an unregenerate world. The judgment passed upon this set of poems at the time by the *Critical Review* seems blasphemous to the fond biographer, and is so devoid of modern smartness as to be almost interesting as a literary fossil. But it must be deemed essentially just, though the reviewer errs, as many reviewers have erred, in measuring the writer's capacity by the standard of his first performance. "These poems," said the *Critical Review*, "are written, as we learn from the title-page, by Mr. Cowper of the Inner Temple, who seems to be a man of a sober and religious turn of mind, with a benevolent heart, and a serious wish to inculcate the precepts of morality; he is not, however, possessed of any superior abilities or the power of genius requisite for so arduous an undertaking. . . . . He says what is incontrovertible, and what has been said over and over again with much gravity, but says nothing new, sprightly, or entertaining; travelling on a plain, level, flat road, with great composure almost through the whole long and tedious volume, which is little better than a dull sermon in very indifferent verse on Truth, the Progress of Error, Charity, and some other grave subjects. If this author had followed the advice given by Caraccioli, and which he has chosen for one of the mottoes prefixed to these poems, he would have clothed his indisputable truths in some more becoming disguise, and rendered his work much more agreeable. In its present shape we cannot compliment him on its beauty; for as this bard himself sweetly sings:—

> "The clear harangue, and cold as it is clear,
> Falls soporific on the listless ear."

In justice to the bard it ought to be said that he wrote under the eye of the Rev. John Newton, to whom the design had been duly submitted, and who had given his *imprimatur* in the shape of a preface which took Johnson, the publisher, aback by its gravity. Newton would not have sanctioned any poetry which had not a distinctly religious object, and he received an assurance

from the poet that the lively passages were introduced only as honey on the rim of the medicinal cup, to commend its healing contents to the lips of a giddy world. The Rev. John Newton must have been exceedingly austere if he thought that the quantity of honey used was excessive.

A genuine desire to make society better is always present in these poems, and its presence lends them the only interest which they possess except as historical monuments of a religious movement. Of satirical vigour they have scarcely a semblance. There are three kinds of satire, corresponding to as many different views of humanity and life; the Stoical, the Cynical, and the Epicurean. Of Stoical satire, with its strenuous hatred of vice and wrong, the type is Juvenal. Of Cynical satire, springing from bitter contempt of humanity, the type is Swift's Gulliver, while its quintessence is embodied in his lines on the Day of Judgment. Of Epicurean satire, flowing from a contempt of humanity which is not bitter, and lightly playing with the weakness and vanities of mankind, Horace is the classical example. To the first two kinds, Cowper's nature was totally alien, and when he attempts anything in either of those lines, the only result is a querulous and censorious acerbity, in which his real feelings had no part, and which on mature reflection offended his own better taste. In the Horatian kind he might have excelled, as the episode of the *Retired Statesman* in one of these poems shows. He might have excelled, that is, if like Horace he had known the world. But he did not know the world. He saw the "great Babel" only "through the loopholes of retreat," and in the columns of his weekly newspaper. Even during the years, long past, which he spent in the world, his experience had been confined to a small literary circle. Society was to him an abstraction on which he discoursed like a pulpiteer. His satiric whip not only has no lash, it is brandished in the air.

No man was ever less qualified for the office of a censor; his judgment is at once disarmed, and a breach in his principles is at once made by the slightest personal influence. Bishops are bad; they are like the Cretans, evil beasts and slow bellies; but the bishop whose brother Cowper knows is a blessing to the Church. Deans and Canons are lazy sinecurists, but there is a bright exception in the case of the Cowper who held a golden stall at Durham. Grinding India is criminal, but Warren Hastings is acacquitted, because he was with Cowper at Westminster. Discipline was deplorably relaxed in all colleges except that of which Cowper's brother was a fellow. Pluralities and resignation bonds, the grossest abuses of the Church, were perfectly defensible in the case of any friend or acquaintance of this Church Reformer. Bitter lines against Popery inserted in *The Task* were struck out, because the writer had made the acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Throckmorton, who were Roman Catholics. Smoking was detestable, except when practised by dear Mr. Bull. Even gambling, the blackest sin of fashionable society, is not to prevent Fox, the

great Whig, from being a ruler in Israel. Besides, in all his social judgments, Cowper is at a wrong point of view. He is always deluded by the idol of his cave. He writes perpetually on the twofold assumption that a life of retirement is more favourable to virtue than a life of action, and that "God made the country, while man made the town. Both parts of the assumption are untrue. A life of action is more favourable to virtue, as a rule, than a life of retirement, and the development of humanity is higher and richer, as a rule, in the town than in the country. If Cowper's retirement was virtuous, it was so because he was actively employed in the exercise of his highest faculties: had he been a mere idler, secluded from his kind, his retirement would not have been virtuous at all. His flight from the world was rendered necessary by his malady, and respectable by his literary work; but it was a flight and not a victory. His misconception was fostered and partly produced by a religion which was essentially ascetic, and which, while it gave birth to characters of the highest and most energetic beneficence, represented salvation too little as the reward of effort, too much as the reward of passive belief and of spiritual emotion.

The most readable of the Moral Satires is *Retirement*, in which the writer is on his own ground, expressing his genuine feelings, and which is, in fact, a foretaste of *The Task*. *Expostulation*, a warning to England from the example of the Jews, is the best constructed; the rest are totally wanting in unity, and even in connexion. In all there are flashes of epigrammatic smartness.

> "How shall I speak thee, or thy power address,
> Thou God of our idolatry, the press?
> By thee, religion, liberty, and laws
> Exert their influence, and advance their cause;
> By thee, worse plagues than Pharaoh's land befell,
> Diffused, make earth the vestibule of hell:
> Thou fountain, at which drink the good and wise,
> Thou ever-bubbling spring of endless lies,
> Like Eden's dread probationary tree,
> Knowledge of good and evil is from thee."

Occasionally there are passages of higher merit. The episode of statesmen in *Retirement* has been already mentioned. The lines on the two disciples going to Emmaus in *Conversation*, though little more than a paraphrase of the Gospel narrative, convey pleasantly the Evangelical idea of the Divine Friend. Cowper says in one of his letters that he had been intimate with a man of fine taste who had confessed to him that though he could not subscribe to the truth of Christianity itself, he could never read this passage of St. Luke without being deeply affected by it, and feeling that if the stamp of divinity was impressed upon anything in the Scriptures, it was upon that passage.

> "It happen'd on a solemn eventide,
> Soon after He that was our surety died,

Two bosom friends, each pensively inclined,
The scene of all those sorrows left behind,
Sought their own village, busied as they went
In musings worthy of the great event:
They spake of him they loved, of him whose life,
Though blameless, had incurr'd perpetual strife,
Whose deeds had left, in spite of hostile arts,
A deep memorial graven on their hearts.
The recollection, like a vein of ore,
The farther traced enrich'd them still the more;
They thought him, and they justly thought him, one
Sent to do more than he appear'd to have done,
To exalt a people, and to place them high
Above all else, and wonder'd he should die.
Ere yet they brought their journey to an end,
A stranger join'd them, courteous as a friend,
And ask'd them with a kind engaging air
What their affliction was, and begg'd a share.
Inform'd, he gather'd up the broken thread,
And truth and wisdom gracing all he said,
Explain'd, illustrated, and search'd so well
The tender theme on which they chose to dwell,
That reaching home, the night, they said is near,
We must not now be parted, sojourn here.—
The new acquaintance soon became a guest,
And made so welcome at their simple feast,
He bless'd the bread, but vanish'd at the word,
And left them both exclaiming, 'Twas the Lord!
Did not our hearts feel all he deign'd to say,
Did they not burn within us by the way?"

The prude going to morning church in *Truth* is a good rendering of Hogarth's picture:—

"Yon ancient prude, whose wither'd features show
She might be young some forty years ago,
Her elbows pinion'd close upon her hips,
Her head erect, her fan upon her lips,
Her eyebrows arch'd, her eyes both gone astray
To watch yon amorous couple in their play,
With bony and unkerchief'd neck defies
The rude inclemency of wintry skies,
And sails with lappet-head and mincing airs
Daily, at clink of bell, to morning prayers.
To thrift and parsimony much inclined,
She yet allows herself that boy behind;
The shivering urchin, bending as he goes,
With slipshod heels, and dew-drops at his nose,
His predecessor's coat advanced to wear,
Which future pages are yet doom'd to share;
Carries her Bible tuck'd beneath his arm,
And hides his hands to keep his fingers warm."

Of personal allusions there are a few; if the satirist had not been prevented from indulging in them by his taste, he would

have been debarred by his ignorance. Lord Chesterfield, as the incarnation of the world and the most brilliant servant of the arch-enemy, comes in for a lashing under the name of Petronius.

> "Petronius! all the muses weep for thee,
> But every tear shall scald thy memory.
> The graces too, while virtue at their shrine
> Lay bleeding under that soft hand of thine,
> Felt each a mortal stab in her own breast,
> Abhorr'd the sacrifice, and cursed the priest.
> Thou polish'd and high-finish'd foe to truth,
> Gray-beard corrupter of our listening youth,
> To purge and skim away the filth of vice,
> That so refined it might the more entice,
> Then pour it on the morals of thy son
> To taint *his* heart, was worthy of *thine own*."

This is about the nearest approach to Juvenal that the Evangelical satirist ever makes. In *Hope* there is a vehement vindication of the memory of Whitefield. It is rather remarkable that there is no mention of Wesley. But Cowper belonged to the Evangelical rather than to the Methodist section. It may be doubted whether the living Whitefield would have been much to his taste.

In the versification of the moral satires there are frequent faults, especially in the earlier poems of the series; though Cowper's power of writing musical verse is attested both by the occasional poems and by *The Task*.

With the Moral Satires may be coupled, though written later, *Tirocinium; or, a Review of Schools*. Here Cowper has the advantage of treating a subject which he understood, about which he felt strongly, and desired for a practical purpose to stir the feelings of his readers. He set to work in bitter earnest. "There is a sting," he says, "in verse that prose neither has nor can have; and I do not know that schools in the gross, and especially public schools, have ever been so pointedly condemned before. But they are become a nuisance, a pest, an abomination, and it is fit that the eyes and noses of mankind should be opened, if possible, to perceive it." His descriptions of the miseries which children in his day endured, and, in spite of all our improvements, must still to some extent endure, in boarding-schools, and of the effects of the system in estranging boys from their parents and deadening home affections, are vivid and true. Of course, the Public School system was not to be overturned by rhyming, but the author of *Tirocinium* awakened attention to its faults, and probably did something towards amending them. The best lines, perhaps, have been already quoted in connexion with the history of the writer's boyhood. There are, however, other telling passages, such at that on the indiscriminate use of emulation as a stimulus:—

> "Our public hives of puerile resort
> That are of chief and most approved report,

To such base hopes in many a sordid soul
Owe their repute in part, but not the whole.
A principle, whose proud pretensions pass
Unquestion'd, though the jewel be but glass,
That with a world not often over-nice
Ranks as a virtue, and is yet a vice,
Or rather a gross compound, justly tried,
Of envy, hatred, jealousy, and pride,
Contributes most perhaps to enhance their fame,
And Emulation is its precious name.
Boys once on fire with that contentious zeal
Feel all the rage that female rivals feel;
The prize of beauty in a woman's eyes
Not brighter than in theirs the scholar's prize.
The spirit of that competition burns
With all varieties of ill by turns,
Each vainly magnifies his own success,
Resents his fellow's, wishes it were less,
Exults in his miscarriage if he fail,
Deems his reward too great if he prevail,
And labors to surpass him day and night,
Less for improvement than to tickle spite.
The spur is powerful, and I grant its force;
It pricks the genius forward in its course,
Allows short time for play, and none for sloth,
And felt alike by each, advances both,
But judge where so much evil intervenes,
The end, though plausible, not worth the means.
Weigh, for a moment, classical desert
Against a heart depraved and temper hurt,
Hurt, too, perhaps for life, for early wrong
Done to the nobler part, affects it long,
And you are staunch indeed in learning's cause,
I you can crown a discipline that draws
Such mischiefs after it, with much applause."

He might have done more, if he had been able to point to the alternative of a good day-school, as a combination of home affections with the superior teachings hardly to be found, except in a large school, and which Cowper, in drawing his comparison between the two systems, fails to take into account.

To the same general class of poems belongs *Anti-Thelypthora*, which it is due to Cowper's memory to say was not published in his lifetime. It is an angry pasquinade on an absurd book advocating polygamy on Biblical grounds, by the Rev. Martin Madan, Cowper's quondam spiritual counsellor. Alone among Cowper's works it has a taint of coarseness.

The Moral Satires pleased Franklin, to whom their social philosophy was congenial, as at a later day, in common with all Cowper's works, they pleased Cobden, who no doubt specially relished the passage in *Charity*, embodying the philanthropic sentiment of Free Trade. There was a trembling consultation as to the expediency of bringing the volume under the notice of Johnson. "One

of his pointed sarcasms, if he should happen to be displeased, would soon find its way into all companies, and spoil the sale." "I think it would be well to send in our joint names, accompanied with a handsome card, such an one as you will know how to fabricate, and such as may predispose him to a favourable perusal of the book, by coaxing him into a good temper; for he is a great bear, with all his learning and penetration." Fear prevailed; but it seems that the book found its way into the dictator's hands, that his judgment on it was kind, and that he even did something to temper the wind of adverse criticism to the shorn lamb. Yet parts of it were likely to incur his displeasure as a Tory, as a Churchman, and as one who greatly preferred Fleet Street to the beauties of nature; while with the sentimental misery of the writer, he could have had no sympathy whatever. Of the incompleteness of Johnson's view of character there could be no better instance than the charming weakness of Cowper. Thurlow and Colman did not even acknowledge their copies, and were lashed for their breach of friendship with rather more vigour than the Moral Satires display, in *The Valedictory*, which unluckily survived for posthumous publication when the culprits had made their peace.

Cowper certainly misread himself if he believed that ambition, even literary ambition, was a large element in his character. But having published, he felt a keen interest in the success of his publication. Yet he took its failure and the adverse criticism very calmly. With all his sensitiveness, from irritable and suspicious egotism, such as is the most common cause of moral madness, he was singularly free. In this respect his philosophy served him well.

It may safely be said that the Moral Satires would have sunk into oblivion if they had not been buoyed up by *The Task*.

CHAPTER V.

THE TASK.

MRS. UNWIN'S influence produced the Moral Satires. *The Task* was born of a more potent inspiration. One day Mrs. Jones, the wife of a neighbouring clergyman, came into Olney to shop, and with her came her sister, Lady Austen, the widow of a Baronet, a woman of the world, who had lived much in France, gay, sparkling and vivacious, but at the same time full of feeling even to overflowing. The apparition acted like magic on the recluse. He desired Mrs. Unwin to ask the two ladies to stay to tea; then shrank from joining the party which he had himself invited; ended by joining it, and, his shyness giving way with a rush, engaged in animated conversation with Lady Austen, and walked with her part of the way home. On her an equally great effect appears to have been produced. A warm friendship at once sprang up, and before long Lady Austen had verses addressed to her as Sister Annie. Her ladyship, on her part, was smitten with a great love of retirement, and at the same time with great admiration for Mr. Scott, the curate of Olney, as a preacher, and she resolved to fit up for herself "that part of our great building which is at present occupied by Dick Coleman, his wife and child, and a thousand rats." That a woman of fashion, accustomed to French salons, should choose such an abode, with a pair of Puritans for her only society, seems to show that one of the Puritans at least must have possessed great powers of attraction. Better quarters were found for her in the Vicarage; and the private way between the gardens, which apparently had been closed since Newton's departure, was opened again.

Lady Austen's presence evidently wrought on Cowper like an elixir: "From a scene of the most uninterrupted retirement," he writes to Mrs. Unwin, "we have passed at once into a state of constant engagement. Not that our society is much multiplied; the addition of an individual has made all this difference. Lady Austen and we pass our days alternately at each other's Chateau. In the morning I walk with one or other of the ladies, and in the evening wind thread. Thus did Hercules, and thus probably did Samson, and thus do I; and, were both those heroes living, I should not fear to challenge them to a trial of skill in that business, or

doubt to beat them both." It was, perhaps, while he was winding thread that Lady Austen told him the story of John Gilpin. He lay awake at night laughing over it, and next morning produced the ballad. It soon became famous, and was recited by Henderson, a popular actor, on the stage, though, as its gentility was doubtful, its author withheld his name. He afterwards fancied that this wonderful piece of humour had been written in a mood of the deepest depression. Probably he had written it in an interval of high spirits between two such moods. Moreover, he sometimes exaggerated his own misery. He will begin a letter with a *de profundis*, and towards the end forget his sorrows, glide into commonplace topics, and write about them in the ordinary strain. Lady Austen inspired *John Gilpin*. She inspired, it seems, the lines on the loss of the Royal George. She did more: she invited Cowper to try his hand at something considerable in blank verse. When he asked her for a subject, she was happier in her choice than the lady who had suggested the *Progress of Error*. She bade him take the sofa on which she was reclining, and which, sofas being then uncommon, was a more striking and suggestive object than it would be now. The right chord was struck; the subject was accepted; and *The Sofa* grew into *The Task;* the title of the song reminding us that it was "commanded by the fair." As *Paradise Lost* is to militant Puritanism, so is *The Task* to the religious movement of its author's time. To its character as the poem of a sect it no doubt owed and still owes much of its popularity. Not only did it give beautiful and effective expression to the sentiments of a large religious party, but it was about the only poetry that a strict Methodist or Evangelical could read; while to those whose worship was unritualistic and who were debarred by their principles from the theatre and the concert, anything in the way of art that was not illicit must have been eminently welcome. But *The Task* has merits of a more universal and enduring kind. Its author himself says of it:—"If the work cannot boast a regular plan (in which respect, however, I do not think it altogether indefensible), it may yet boast that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage, and that, except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency, to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue." A regular plan, assuredly, *The Task* has not. It rambles through a vast variety of subjects, religious, political, social, philosophical, and horticultural, with as little of method as its author used in taking his morning walks. Nor, as Mr. Benham has shown, are the reflections, as a rule, naturally suggested by the preceding passage. From the use of a sofa by the gouty to those who, being free from gout, do not need sofas—and so to country walks and country life, is hardly a natural transition. It is hardly a natural transition from the ice palace built by a Russian despot, to despotism and politics in general. But if Cowper deceives himself in fancying that there is a plan or a close connexion of parts, he is right as

to the existence of a pervading tendency. The praise of retirement and of country life as most friendly to piety and virtue, is the perpetual refrain of *The Task*, if not its definite theme. From this idea immediately flow the best and the most popular passages: those which please apart from anything peculiar to a religious school; those which keep the poem alive; those which have found their way into the heart of the nation, and intensified the taste for rural and domestic happiness, to which they most winningly appeal. In these Cowper pours out his inmostfeelings, with the liveliness of exhilaration, enhanced by contrast with previous misery. The pleasures of the country and of home—the walk, the garden, but above all the "intimate delights" of the winter evening, the snug parlour, with its close-drawn curtains shutting out the stormy night, the steaming and bubbling tea-urn, the cheerful circle, the book read aloud, the newspaper through which we look out into the unquiet world—are painted by the writer with a heartfelt enjoyment which infects the reader. These are not the joys of a hero, nor are they the joys of an Alcæus "singing amidst the clash of arms, or when he had moored on the wet shore his storm-tost barque." But they are pure joys, and they present themselves in competition with those of Ranelagh and the Basset Table, which are not heroic or even masculine, any more than they are pure.

The well-known passages at the opening of *The Winter Evening* are the self-portraiture of a soul in bliss—such bliss as that soul could know—and the poet would have found it very difficult to depict to himself by the utmost effort of his religious imagination any paradise which he would really have enjoyed more.

"Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast.
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.

* * * *

This folio of four pages, happy work!
Which not even critics criticise, that holds
Inquisitive attention while I read
Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break,
What is it but a map of busy life,
Its fluctuations and its vast concerns?

* * * *

'Tis pleasant through the loop-holes of retreat
To peep at such a world. To see the stir
Of the great Babel and not feel the crowd.
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates
At a safe distance, where the dying sound
Falls a soft murmur on the injured ear.
Thus sitting and surveying thus at ease
The globe and its concerns, I seem advanced

To some secure and more than mortal height,
That liberates and exempts me from them all.
It turns submitted to my view, turns round
With all it generations; I behold
The tumult and am still. The sound of war
Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me,
Grieves but alarms me not. I mourn the pride
And avarice that make man a wolf to man,
Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats
By which he speaks the language of his heart,
And sigh, but never tremble at the sound.
He travels and expatiates, as the bee
From flower to flower, so he from land to land;
The manners, customs, policy of all
Pay contribution to the store he gleans;
He sucks intelligence in every clime,
And spreads the honey of his deep research
At his return, a rich repast for me.
He travels, and I too. I tread his deck,
Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes
Discover countries, with a kindred heart
Suffer his woes and share in his escapes,
While fancy, like the finger of a clock,
Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.
Oh, winter! ruler of the inverted year,
Thy scatter'd hair with sleet like ashes fill'd,
Thy breath congeal'd upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age; thy forehead wrapt in clouds
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car indebted to no wheels,
And urged by storms along its slippery way;
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art. Thou hold'st the sun
A prisoner in the yet undawning East,
Shortening his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him impatient of his stay
Down to the rosy West. But kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gathering at short notice in one group
The family dispersed by daylight and its cares.
I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fireside enjoyments, home-born happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturb'd retirement, and the hours
Of long uninterrupted evening know."

The writer of *The Task* also deserves the crown which he has himself claimed as a close observer and truthful painter of nature. In this respect, he challenges comparison with Thomson. The range of Thomson is far wider; he paints nature in all her moods, Cowper only in a few, and those the gentlest, though he has said of himself that "he was always an admirer of thunder-storms, even before he knew whose voice he heard in them, but especially of

thunder rolling over the great waters." The great waters he had not seen for many years; he had never, so far as we know, seen mountains, hardly even high hills; his only landscape was the flat country watered by the Ouse. On the other hand, he is perfectly genuine, thoroughly English, entirely emancipated from false Arcadianism, the yoke of which still sits heavily upon Thomson, whose "muse" moreover, is perpetually "wafting" him away from the country and the climate which he knows to countries and climates which he does not know, and which he describes in the style of a prize poem. Cowper's landscapes, too, are peopled with the peasantry of England; Thomson's, with Damons, Palæmons, and Musidoras, tricked out in the sentimental costume of the sham idyl. In Thomson, you always find the effort of the artist working up a description; in Cowper, you find no effort; the scene is simply mirrored on a mind of great sensibility and high pictorial power.

"And witness, dear companion of my walks,
Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive
Fast lock'd in mine, with pleasure such as love,
Confirm'd by long experience of thy worth
And well-tried virtues, could alone inspire—
Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long.
Thou know'st my praise of nature most sincere,
And that my raptures are not conjured up
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
But genuine, and art partner of them all.
How oft upon yon eminence our pace
Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne
The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
While Admiration, feeding at the eye,
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene!
Thence with what pleasure have we just discern
The distant plough slow moving, and beside
His labouring team that swerved not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy!
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast rooted in their bank,
Stand, never overlook'd, our favourite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tower,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the listening ear,
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages, remote.
Scenes must be beautiful, which, daily viewed,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years—
Praise justly due to those that I describe."

This is evidently genuine and spontaneous. We stand with Cowper and Mrs. Unwin on the hill in the ruffling wind, like them, scarcely conscious that it blows, and feed admiration at the eye upon the rich and thoroughly English champaign that is outspread below.

"Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds,
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore
The tone of languid Nature. Mighty winds,
That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike
The dash of Ocean on his winding shore,
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind;
Unnumber'd branches waving in the blast,
And all their leaves fast fluttering, all at once.
Nor less composure waits upon the roar
Of distant floods, or on the softer voice
Of neighbouring fountain, or of *rills that slip*
Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall
Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length
In matted grass that with a livelier green
Betrays the secret of their silent course.
Nature inanimate employs sweet sounds,
But animated nature sweeter still,
To soothe and satisfy the human ear.
Ten thousand warblers cheer the day, and one
The livelong night: nor these alone, whose notes
Nice-finger'd Art must emulate in vain,
But cawing rooks, and kites that swim sublime
In still-repeated circles, screaming loud,
The jay, the pie, and e'en the boding owl
That hails the rising moon, have charms for me.
Sounds inharmonious in themselves and harsh,
Yet heard in scenes where peace forever reigns,
And only there, please highly for their sake."

Affection such as the last lines display for the inharmonious at well as the harmonious, for the uncomely as well as the comely parts of nature, has been made familiar by Wordsworth, but it was new in the time of Cowper. Let us compare a landscape painted by Pope in his Windsor forest, with the lines just quoted, and we shall see the difference between the art of Cowper and that of the Augustan age.

"Here waving groves a checkered scene display,
And part admit and part exclude the day,
As some coy nymph her lover's warm address
Not quite indulges, nor can quite repress.
There interspersed in lawns and opening glades
The trees arise that share each other's shades:
Here in full light the russet plains extend,
There wrapt in clouds, the bluish hills ascend.
E'en the wild heath displays her purple dyes,
And midst the desert fruitful fields arise,
That crowned with tufted trees and springing corn.
Like verdant isles the sable waste adorn."

The low Berkshire hills wrapt in clouds on a sunny day; a sable desert in the neighbourhood of Windsor; fruitful fields arising in it, and crowned with tufted trees and springing corn—evidently Pope saw all this, not on an eminence, in the ruffling wind, but in his study with his back to the window, and the Georgics or a translation of them before him.

Here, again, is a little picture of rural life from the *Winter Morning Walk.*

"The cattle mourn in corners, where the fence
Screens them, and seem half-petrified to sleep
In unrecumbent sadness. There they wait
Their wonted fodder; not like hungering man,
Fretful if unsupplied; but silent, meek,
And patient of the slow-paced swain's delay.
He from the stack carves out the accustomed load.
Deep-plunging, and again deep plunging oft,
His broad keen knife into the solid mass:
Smooth as a wall the upright remnant stands,
With such undeviating and even force
He severs it away: no needless care,
Lest storms should overset the leaning pile
Deciduous, or its own unbalanced weight.
Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcern'd
The cheerful haunts of man; to wield the axe
And drive the wedge in yonder forest drear,
From morn to eve, his solitary task.
Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears
And tail cropp'd short, half lurcher and half cur,
His dog attends him. Close behind his heel
Now creeps he slow; and now, with many a frisk
Wide-scampering, snatches up the drifted snow
With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout;
Then shakes his powder'd coat and barks for joy.
Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl
Moves right toward the mark; nor stops for aught,
But now and then with pressure of his thumb
To adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube,
That fumes beneath his nose: the trailing cloud
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air."

The minutely faithful description of the man carving the load of hay out of the stack, and again those of the gambolling dog, and the woodman smoking his pipe with the steam of smoke trailing behind him, remind us of the touches of minute fidelity in Homer. The same may be said of many other passages.

"The sheepfold here
Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.
At first, progressive as a stream they seek
The middle field; but, scatter'd by degrees,
Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land.
There from the sun-burnt hay-field homeward creeps
The loaded wain; while lighten'd of its charge,

The wain that meets it passes swiftly by;
The boorish driver leaning o'er his team
Vociferous and impatient of delay."

A specimen of more imaginative and distinctly poetical description is the well-known passage on evening, in writing which Cowper would seem to have had Collins in his mind.

"Come, Evening, once again, season of peace;
Return, sweet Evening, and continue long!
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,
With matron-step slow-moving, while the Night
Treads on thy sweeping train; one hand employed
In letting fall the curtain of repose
On bird and beast, the other charged for man
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day:
Not sumptuously adorn'd, nor needing aid,
Like homely-featured Night, of clustering gems!
A star or two just twinkling on thy brow
Suffices thee; save that the moon is thine
No less than hers, not worn indeed on high
With ostentatious pageantry, but set
With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,
Resplendent less, but of an ampler round."

Beyond this line Cowper does not go, and had no idea of going; he never thinks of lending a soul to material nature as Wordsworth and Shelley do. He is the poetic counterpart of Gainsborough, as the great descriptive poets of a later and more spiritual day are the counterparts of Turner. We have said that Cowper's peasants are genuine as well as his landscape; he might have been a more exquisite Crabbe if he had turned his mind that way, instead of writing sermons about a world which to him was little more than an abstraction, distorted, moreover, and discoloured by his religious asceticism.

"Poor, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat,
Such claim compassion in a night like this,
And have a friend in every feeling heart.
Warm'd, while it lasts, by labour, all day long
They brave the season, and yet find at eve,
Ill clad, and fed but sparely, time to cool.
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights
Her scanty stock of brushwood, blazing clear,
But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.
A few small embers left, she nurses well;
And, while her infant race, with outspread hands
And crowded knees sit cowering o'er the sparks,
Retires, content to quake, so they be warm'd.
The man feels least, as more inured than she
To winter, and the current in his veins
More briskly moved by his severer toil;
Yet he, too, finds his own distress in theirs.

The taper soon extinguish'd, which I saw
Dangled along at the cold finger's end
Just when the day declined; and the brown loaf
Lodged on the shelf, half eaten without sauce
Of savoury cheese, or butter, costlier still:
Sleep seems their only refuge: for, alas!
Where penury is felt the thought is chained,
And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few!
With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care
Ingenious Parsimony takes, but just
Saves the small inventory, bed and stool,
Skillet, and old carved chest, from public sale.
They live, and live without extorted alms
From grudging hands: but other boast have none
To soothe their honest pride that scorns to beg,
Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love."

Here we have the plain, unvarnished record of visitings among the poor of Olney. The last two lines are simple truth as well as the rest.

"In some passages, especially in the second book, you will observe me very satirical." In the second book of *The Task* there are some bitter things about the clergy; and in the passage pourtraying a fashionable preacher, there is a touch of satiric vigour, or rather of that power of comic description which was one of the writer's gifts. But of Cowper as a satirist enough has been said.

"What there is of a religious cast in the volume I have thrown towards the end of it, for two reasons; first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance; and, secondly, that my best impressions might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lope de Vega or Voltaire, not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that I may please them, but I will not please them at the expense of conscience." The passages of *The Task* penned by conscience, taken together, form a lamentably large proportion of the poem. An ordinary reader can be carried through them, if at all, only by his interest in the history of opinion, or by the companionship of the writer, who is always present, as Walton is in his Angler, as White is in his Selbourne. Cowper, however, even at his worst, is a highly cultivated Methodist: if he is sometimes enthusiastic, and possibly superstitious, he is never coarse or unctuous. He speaks with contempt of "the twang of the conventicle." Even his enthusiasm had by this time been somewhat tempered. Just after his conversion he used to preach to everybody. He had found out, as he tells us himself, that this was a mistake, that "the pulpit was for preaching; the garden, the parlour, and the walk abroad were for friendly and agreeable conversation." It may have been his consciousness of a certain change in himself that deterred him from taking Newton into his confidence when we engaged upon *The Task*. The worst passages are those which betray a fanatical antipathy to natural science, especially that in the third book (150–190). The episode of the judgment

of Heaven on the young atheist Misagathus, in the sixth book, is also fanatical and repulsive.

Puritanism had come into violent collision with the temporal power, and had contracted a character fiercely political and revolutionary. Methodism fought only against unbelief, vice, and the coldness of the Establishment; it was in no way political, much less revolutionary; by the recoil from the atheism of the French Revolution, its leaders, including Wesley himself, were drawn rather to the Tory side. Cowper, we have said, always remained in principle what he had been born, a Whig, an unrevolutionary Whig, an "Old Whig," to adopt the phrase made canonical by Burke.

> "'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
> Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume,
> And we are weeds without it. All constraint
> Except what wisdom lays on evil men
> Is evil."

The sentiment of these lines, which were familiar and dear to Cobden, is tempered by judicious professions of loyalty to a king who rules in accordance with the law. At one time Cowper was inclined to regard the government of George III. as a repetition of that of Charles I., absolutist in the State and reactionary in the Church; but the progress of revolutionary opinions evidently increased his loyalty, as it did that of many other Whigs, to the good Tory king. We shall presently see, however, that the views of the French Revolution itself expressed in his letters are wonderfully rational, calm, and free from the political panic and the apocalyptic hallucination, both of which we should rather have expected to find in him. He describes himself to Newton as having seen, since his second attack of madness, "an extramundane character with reference to this globe, and though not a native of the moon, not made of the dust of this planet." The Evangelical party has remained down to the present day non-political, and in its own estimation extramundane, taking part in the affairs of the nation only when some religious object was directly in view. In speaking of the family of nations, an Evangelical poet is of course a preacher of peace and human brotherhood. He has even in some lines of *Charity*, which also were dear to Cobden, remarkably anticipated the sentiment of modern economists respecting the influence of free trade in making one nation of mankind. The passage is defaced by an atrociously bad simile:—

> "Again—the band of commerce was design'd,
> To associate all the branches of mankind,
> And if a boundless plenty be the robe,
> Trade is the golden girdle of the globe.
> Wise to promote whatever end he means,
> God opens fruitful Nature's various scenes,
> Each climate needs what other climes produce,
> And offers something to the general use;

No land but listens to the common call,
And in return receives supply from all.
This genial intercourse and mutual aid
Cheers what were else an universal shade,
Calls Nature from her ivy-mantled den,
And softens human rock-work into men."

Now and then, however, in reading *The Task*, we come across a dash of warlike patriotism which, amidst the general philanthropy, surprises and offends the reader's palate, like the taste of garlic in our butter.

An innocent Epicurism, tempered by religious asceticism of a mild kind—such is the philosophy of *The Task*, and such the ideal embodied in the portrait of the happy man with which it concludes. Whatever may be said of the religious asceticism, the Epicurism required a corrective to redeem it from selfishness and guard it against self-deceit. This solitary was serving humanity in the best way he could, not by his prayers, as in one rather fanatical passage he suggests, but by his literary work; he had need also to remember that humanity was serving him. The newspaper through which he looks out so complacently into the great "Babel," has been printed in the great Babel itself, and brought by the poor postman, with his "spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks," to the recluse sitting comfortably by his fireside. The "fragrant lymph" poured by "the fair" for their companion in his cosy seclusion, has been brought over the sea by the trader, who must encounter the moral dangers of a trader's life, as well as the perils of the stormy wave. It is delivered at the door by

"The waggoner who bears
The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,
With half-shut eyes and puckered cheeks and teeth
Presented bare against the storm;"

and whose coarseness and callousness, as he whips his team, are the consequences of the hard calling in which he ministers to the recluse's pleasure and refinement. If town life has its evils, from the city comes all that makes retirement comfortable and civilised. Retirement without the city would have been bookless, and have fed on acorns.

Rousseau is conscious of the necessity of some such institution as slavery, by way of basis for his beautiful life according to nature. The celestial purity and felicity of St. Pierre's *Paul and Virginia* are sustained by the labour of two faithful slaves. A weak point of Cowper's philosophy, taken apart from his own saving activity as a poet, betrays itself in somewhat similar way.

"Or if the garden with its many cares
All well repaid demand him, he attends
The welcome call, conscious how much the hand
Of lubbard labour needs his watchful eye,

Oft loitering lazily if not o'erseen;
Or misapplying his unskilful strength
But much performs himself, *no works indeed*
That ask robust tough sinews bred to toil,
Servile employ, but such as may amuse,
Not tire, demanding rather skill than force."

We are told in *The Task* that there is no sin in allowing our own happiness to be enhanced by contrast with the less happy condition of others: if we are doing our best to increase the happiness of others, there is none. Cowper, as we have said before, was doing this to the utmost of his limited capacity.

Both in the Moral Satires and in *The Task*, there are sweeping denunciations of amusements which we now justly deem innocent, and without which, or something equivalent to them, the wrinkles on the brow of care could not be smoothed, nor life preserved from dulness and moroseness. There is fanaticism in this, no doubt; but in justice to the Methodist as well as to the Puritan, let it be remembered that the stage, card parties, and even dancing, once had in them something from which even the most liberal morality might recoil.

In his writings generally, but especially in *The Task*, Cowper, besides being an apostle of virtuous retirement and evangelical piety, is, by his general tone, an apostle of sensibility. *The Task* is a perpetual protest not only against the fashionable vices and the irreligion but against the hardness of the world; and in a world which worshipped Chesterfield the protest was not needless, nor was it ineffective. Among the most tangible characteristics of this special sensibility is the tendency of its brimming love of humankind to overflow upon animals; and of this there are marked instances in some passages of *The Task*.

"I would not enter on my list of friends
(Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,
Yet wanting sensibility) the man
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm."

Of Cowper's sentimentalism (to use the word in a neutral sense), part flowed from his own temperament, part was Evangelical, but part belonged to an element which was European, which produced the *Nouvelle Heloise* and the *Sorrows of Werther*, and which was found among the Jacobins in sinister companionship with the cruel frenzy of the Revolution. Cowper shows us several times that he had been a reader of Rousseau, nor did he fail to produce in his time a measure of the same effect which Rousseau produced; though there have been so many sentimentalists since, and the vein has been so much worked, that it is difficult to carry ourselves back in imagination to the day in which Parisian ladies could forego balls to read the *Nouvelle Heloise*, or the stony heart of people of the world could be melted by *The Task*.

In his versification, as in his descriptions, Cowper flattered

himself that he imitated no one. But he manifestly imitates the softer passages of Milton, whose music he compares in a rapturous passage of one of his letters to that of a fine organ. To produce melody and variety, he, like Milton, avails himself fully of all the resources of a composite language. Blank verse confined to short Anglo-Saxon words is apt to strike the ear, not like the swell of an organ, but like the tinkle of a musical-box.

The Task made Cowper famous. He was told that he had sixty readers at the Hague alone. The interest of his relations and friends in him revived, and those of whom he had heard nothing for many years emulously renewed their connexion. Colman and Thurlow reopened their correspondence with him, Colman writing to him "like a brother." Disciples—young Mr. Rose, for instance—came to sit at his feet. Complimentary letters were sent to him, and poems submitted to his judgment. His portrait was taken by famous painters. Literary lion-hunters began to fix their eyes upon him. His renown spread even to Olney. The clerk of All Saints', Northampton, came over to ask him to write the verses annually appended to the bill of mortality for that parish. Cowper suggested that "there were several men of genius in Northampton, particularly Mr. Cox, the statuary, who, as everybody knew, was a first-rate maker of verses." "Alas!" replied the clerk, "I have heretofore borrowed help from him, but he is a gentleman of so much reading that the people of our town cannot understand him." The compliment was irresistible, and for seven years the author of *The Task* wrote the mortuary verses for All Saints', Northampton. Amusement, not profit, was Cowper's aim; he rather rashly gave away his copyright to his publisher, and his success does not seem to have brought him money in a direct way; but it brought him a pension of 300*l.* in the end. In the meantime it brought him presents, and among them an annual gift of 50*l.* from an anonymous hand, the first instalment being accompanied by a pretty snuff-box ornamented with a picture of the three hares. From the gracefulness of the gift, Southey infers that it came from a woman, and he conjectures that the woman was Theodora.

CHAPTER VI.

SHORT POEMS AND TRANSLATIONS.

The Task was not quite finished when the influence which had inspired it was withdrawn. Among the little mysteries and scandals of literary history is the rupture between Cowper and Lady Austen. Soon after the commencement of their friendship there had been a "fracas," of which Cowper gives an account in a letter to William Unwin. "My letters have already apprised you of that close and intimate connexion that took place between the lady you visited in Queen Anne Street and us. Nothing could be more promising, though sudden in the commencement. She treated us with as much unreservedness of communication, as if we had been in the same house and educated together. At her departure, she herself proposed a correspondence, and, because writing does not agree with your mother, proposed a correspondence with me. This sort of intercourse had not been long maintained before I discovered, by some slight intimations of it, that she had conceived displeasure at somewhat I had written, though I cannot now recollect it; conscious of none but the most upright, inoffensive intentions, I yet apologised for the passage in question, and the flaw was healed again. Our correspondence after this proceeded smoothly for a considerable time; but at length, having had repeated occasion to observe that she expressed a sort of romantic idea of our merits, and built such expectations of felicity upon our friendship, as we were sure that nothing human could possibly answer, I wrote to remind her that we were mortal. to recommend her not to think more highly of us than the subject would warrant, and intimating that when we embellish a creature with colors taken from our own fancy, and, so adorned, admire and praise it beyond its real merits, we make it an idol, and have nothing to expect in the end but that it will deceive our hopes, and that we shall derive nothing from it but a painful conviction of our error. Your mother heard me read the letter; she read it herself, and honoured it with her warm approbation. But it gave mortal offence; it received, indeed, an answer, but such an one as I could by no means reply to; and there ended (for it was impossible it should ever be renewed) a friendship that bid fair to be lasting; being formed with a woman whose seeming stability of temper, whose knowledge of the world and great ex-

perience of its folly, but, above all, whose sense of religion and seriousness of mind (for with all that gaiety she is a great thinker) induced us both, in spite of that cautious reserve that marked our characters, to trust her, to love and value her, and to open our hearts for her reception. It may be necessary to add that, by her own desire, I wrote to her under the assumed relation of a brother, and she to me as my sister. *Ceu fumus in auras.*" It is impossible to read this without suspecting that there was more of "romance" on one side than there was either of romance or of consciousness of the situation on the other. On that occasion the reconciliation, though "impossible," took place, the lady sending, by way of olive branch, a pair of ruffles, which it was known she had begun to work before the quarrel. The second rupture was final. Hayley, who treats the matter with sad solemnity, tells us that Cowper's letter of farewell to Lady Austen, as she assured him herself, was admirable, though unluckily, not being gratified by it at the time, she had thrown it into the fire. Cowper has himself given us, in a letter to Lady Hesketh, with reference to the final rupture, a version of the whole affair:—"There came a lady into this country, by name and title Lady Austen, the widow of the late Sir Robert Austen. At first she lived with her sister about a mile from Olney; but in a few weeks took lodgings at the Vicarage here. Between the Vicarage and the back of our house are interposed our garden, an orchard, and the garden belonging to the Vicarage. She had lived much in France, was very sensible, and had infinite vivacity. She took a great liking to us, and we to her. She had been used to a great deal of company, and we, fearing that she would feel such a transition into silent retirement irksome, contrived to give her our agreeable company often. Becoming continually more and more intimate, a practice at length obtained of our dining with each other alternately every day, Sundays excepted. In order to facilitate our communication, we made doors in the two garden-walls aforesaid, by which means we consideraby shortened the way from one house to the other, and could meet when we pleased without entering the town at all—a measure the rather expedient, because the town is abominably dirty, and s,he kept no carriage. On her first settlement in our neighbourhood I made it my own particular business (for at that time I was not employed in writing, having published my first volume and not begun my second) to pay my *devoirs* to her ladyship every morning at eleven. Customs very soon became laws. I began *The Task*, for she was the lady who gave me the *Sofa* for a subject. Being once engaged in the work, I began to feel the inconvenience of my morning attendance. We had seldom breakfasted ourselves till ten; and the intervening hour was all the time I could find in the whole day for writing, and occasionally it would happen that the half of that hour was all that I could secure for the purpose. But there was no remedy. Long usage had made that which was at first optional a point of good manners, and consequently of necessity, and I was forced to neglect *The Task* to attend upon the Muse

who had inspired the subject. But she had ill-health, and before I had quite finished the work was obliged to repair to Bristol." Evidently this was not the whole account of the matter, or there would have been no need for a formal letter of farewell. We are very sorry to find the revered Mr. Alexander Knox saying, in his correspondence with Bishop Jebb, that he had a severer idea of Lady Austen than he should wish to put into writing for publication, and that he almost suspected she was a very artful woman. On the other hand, the unsentimental Mr. Scott is reported to have said, "Who can be surprised that two women should be continually in the society of one man and not quarrel, sooner or later, with each other?" Considering what Mrs. Unwin had been to Cowper, and what he had been to her, a little jealousy on her part would not have been highly criminal. But, as Southey observes, we shall soon see two women continually in the society of this very man without quarrelling with each other. That Lady Austen's behaviour to Mrs. Unwin was in the highest degree affectionate, Cowper has himself assured us. Whatever the cause may have been, this bird of paradise, having alighted for a moment in Olney, took wing and was seen no more.

Her place as a companion was supplied, and more than supplied, by Lady Hesketh, like her a woman of the world, and almost as bright and vivacious, but with more sense and stability of character, and who, moreover, could be treated as a sister without any danger of misunderstanding. The renewal of the intercourse between Cowper and the merry and affectionate play-fellow of his early days, had been one of the best fruits borne to him by *The Task*, or perhaps we should rather say by *John Gilpin;* for on reading that ballad she first became aware that her cousin had emerged from the dark seclusion of his truly Christian happiness, and might again be capable of intercourse with her sunny nature. Full of real happiness for Cowper were her visits to Olney; the announcement of her coming threw him into a trepidation of delight. And how was this new rival received by Mrs. Unwin? "There is something," says Lady Hesketh, in a letter which has been already quoted, "truly affectionate and sincere in Mrs. Unwin's manner. No one can express more heartily than she does her joy to have me at Olney; and as this must be for his sake, it is an additional proof of her regard and esteem for him." She could even cheerfully yield precedence in trifles, which is the greatest trial of all. "Our friend," says Lady Hesketh, "delights in a large table and a large chair. There are two of the latter comforts in my parlour. I am sorry to say that he and I always spread ourselves out in them, leaving poor Mrs. Unwin to find all the comfort she can in a small one, half as high again as ours, and considerably harder than marble. However, she protests it is what she likes, that she prefers a high chair to a low one, and a hard to a soft one; and I hope she is sincere; indeed, I am persuaded she is. She never gave the slightest reason for doubting her sincerity; so Mr. Scott's coarse theory of the "two women" falls to the ground; though, as

Lady Hesketh was not Lady Austen, room is still left for the more delicate and interesting hypothesis.

By Lady Hesketh's care Cowper was at last taken out of the "well" at Olney and transferred, with his partner, to a house at Weston, a place in the neighbourhood, but on higher ground, more cheerful, and in better air. The house at Weston belonged to Mr. Throckmorton, of Weston Hall, with whom and Mrs. Throckmorton, Cowper had become so intimate that they were already his Mr. and Mrs. Frog. It is a proof of his freedom from fanatical bitterness that he was rather drawn to them by their being Roman Catholics, and having suffered rude treatment from the Protestant boors of the neighbourhood. Weston Hall had its grounds, with the colonnade of chestnuts, the "sportive light" of which still "dances" on the pages of *The Task;* with the Wilderness,—

> "Whose well-rolled walks,
> With curvature of slow and easy sweep,
> Deception innocent, give ample space
> To narrow bounds—"

with the Grove,—

> "Between the upright shafts of whose tall elms
> We may discern the thresher at his task,
> Thump after thump resounds the constant flail
> That seems to swing uncertain, and yet falls
> Full on the destined ear. Wide flies the chaff,
> The rustling straw sends up a fragrant mist
> Of atoms, sparkling in the noonday beam."

A pretty little vignette, which the threshing-machine has now made antique. There were ramblings, picnics, and little dinner-parties. Lady Hesketh kept a carriage. Gayhurst, the seat of Mr. Wright, was visited, as well as Weston Hall; the life of the lonely pair was fast becoming social. The Rev. John Newton was absent in the flesh, but he was present in the spirit, thanks to the tattle of Olney. To show that he was, he addressed to Mrs. Unwin a letter of remonstrance on the serious change which had taken place in the habits of his spiritual children. It was answered by her companion, who in repelling the censure mingles the dignity of self-respect with a just appreciation of the censor's motives, in a style which showed that although he was sometimes mad, he was not a fool.

Having succeeded in one great poem, Cowper thought of writing another, and several subjects were started—*The Mediterranean*, *The Four Ages of Man*, *Yardley Oak*. *The Mediterranean* would not have suited him well if it was to be treated historically, for of history he was even more ignorant than most of those who have had the benefit of a classical education, being capable of believing that the Latin element of our language had come in with the Roman conquest. Of the *Four Ages* he wrote a fragment. Of *Yardley Oak* he wrote the opening; it was, apparently, to have been a survey of the

countries in connexion with an immemorial oak which stood in a neighbouring chace. But he was forced to say that the mind of man was not a fountain but a cistern, and his was a broken one. He had expended his stock of materials for a long poem in *The Task*.

These, the sunniest days of Cowper's life, however, gave birth to many of those short poems which are perhaps his best, certainly his most popular works, and which will probably keep his name alive when *The Task* is read only in extracts. *The Loss of the Royal George*, *The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk*, *The Poplar Field*, *The Shrubbery*, the *Lines on a Young Lady*, and those *To Mary*, will hold their places forever in the treasury of English Lyrics. In its humble way *The Needless Alarm* is one of the most perfect of human compositions. Cowper had reason to complain of Æsop for having written his fables before him. One great charm of these little pieces is their perfect spontaneity. Many of them were never published; and generally they have the air of being the simple effusions of the moment, gay or sad. When Cowper was in good spirits his joy, intensified by sensibility and past suffering, played like a fountain of light on all the little incidents of his quiet life. An ink-glass, a flatting mill, a halibut served up for dinner, the killing of a snake in the garden, the arrival of a friend wet after a journey, a cat shut up in a drawer, sufficed to elicit a little jet of poetical delight, the highest and brightest jet of being *John Gilpin*. Lady Austen's voice and touch still faintly live in two or three pieces which were written for her harpsichord. Some of the short poems, on the other hand, are poured from the darker urn, and the finest of them all is the saddest. There is no need of illustrations unless it be to call attention to a secondary quality less noticed than those of more importance. That which used to be specially called "wit," the faculty of ingenious and unexpected combination, such as is shown in the similes of *Hudibras* was possessed by Cowper in large measure.

"A friendship that in frequent fits
Of controversial rage emits
The sparks of disputation,
Like hand-in-hand insurance plates,
Most unavoidably creates
The thought of conflagration.

"Some fickle creatures boast a soul
True as a needle to the pole,
Their humour yet so various—
They manifest their whole life through
The needle's deviations too,
Their love is so precarious.

"The great and small but rarely meet
On terms of amity complete;
Plebeians must surrender,
And yield so much to noble folk,
is combining fire with smoke,
Obscurity with splendour.

"Some are so placid and serene
(As Irish bogs are always green),
They sleep secure from waking;
And are indeed a bog, that bears
Your unparticipated cares
Unmoved and without quaking.

"Courtier and patriot cannot mix
Their heterogeneous politics
Without an effervescence,
Like that of salts with lemon juice,
Which does not yet like that produce
A friendly coalescence."

Faint presages of Byron are heard in such a poem as *The Shrubbery;* and of Wordsworth in such a poem as that *To a Young Lady.* But of the lyrical depth and passion of the great Revolution poets Cowper is wholly devoid. His soul was stirred by no movement so mighty, if it were even capable of the impulse. Tenderness he has, and pathos as well as playfulness; has has unfailing grace and ease; he has clearness like that of a trout-stream. Fashions, even our fashions, change. The more metaphysical poetry of our time has indeed too much in it, besides the metaphysics, to be in any danger of being ever laid on the shelf with the once admired conceits of Cowley; yet it may one day in part lose, while the easier and more limpid kind of poetry may in part regain, its charm.

The opponents of the Slave Trade tried to enlist this winning voice in the service of their cause. Cowper disliked the task, but he wrote two or three anti-Slave-Trade ballads. *The Slave Trader in the Dumps*, with its ghastly array of horrors dancing a jig to a ballad metre, justifies the shrinking of an artist from a subject hardly fit for art.

If the cistern which had supplied *The Task* was exhausted, the rill of occasional poems still ran freely, fed by a spring which, so long as life presented the most trivial object or incident, could not fail. Why did not Cowper go on writing these charming pieces, which he evidently produced with the greatest facility? Instead of this, he took, under an evil star, to translating Homer. The translation of Homer into verse is the Polar Expedition of literature, always failing, yet still desperately renewed. Homer defies modern reproduction. His primeval simplicity is a dew of the dawn which can never be re-distilled. His primeval savagery is almost equally unpresentable. What civilized poet can don the barbarian sufficiently to revel, or seem to revel, in the ghastly details of carnage,in hideous wounds described with surgical gusto, in the butchery of captives in cold blood,or even in those particulars of the shambles and the spit which to the troubadour of barbarism seem as delightful as the images of the harvest and the vintage? Poetry can be translated into poetry only by taking up the ideas of the original into the mind of the translator, which is very difficult when the translator and the original are separated by a gulf of thought and

feeling, and when the gulf is very wide, becomes impossible. There is nothing for it in the case of Homer but a prose translation. Even in prose to find perfect equivalents for some of the Homeric phrases is not easy. Whatever the chronological date of the Homeric poems may be, their political and psychological date may be pretty well fixed. Politically they belong, as the episode of Thersites shows, to the rise of democracy and to its first collision with aristocracy, which Homer regards with the feelings of a bard who sang in aristocratic halls. Psychologically they belong to the time when, in ideas and language, the moral was just disengaging itself from the physical. In the wail of Andromache, for instance, *adinon epos*, which Pope improves into "sadly dear," and Cowper, with better taste at all events, renders "precious," is really semi-physical, and scarcely capable of exact translation. It belongs to an unreproducible past, like the fierce joy which, in the same wail, bursts from the savage woman in the midst of her desolation at the thought of the numbers whom her husband's hands had slain. Cowper had studied the Homeric poems thoroughly in his youth; he knew them so well that he was able to translate them, not very incorrectly with only the help of a Clavis; he understood their peculiar qualities as well as it was possible for a reader without the historic sense to do; he had compared Pope's translation carefully with the original, and had decisively noted the defects which make it not a version of Homer, but a periwigged epic of the Augustan age. In his own translation he avoids Pope's faults, and he preserves at least the dignity of the original, while his command of language could never fail him, nor could he ever lack the guidance of good taste. But we well know where he will be at his best. We turn at once to such passages as the description of Calypso's Isle.

"Alighting on Pieria, down he (Hermes) stooped
To Ocean, and the billows lightly skimmed
In form a sea-mew, such as in the bays
Tremendous of the barren deep her food
Seeking, dips oft in brine her ample wing.
In such disguise o'er many a wave he rode,
But reaching, now, that isle remote, forsook
The azure deep, and at the spacious grove
Where dwelt the amber-tressed nymph arrived
Found her within. A fire on all the hearth
Blazed sprightly, and, afar diffused, the scent
Of smooth-split cedar and of cypress-wood
Odorous, burning cheered the happy isle.
She, busied at the loom and plying fast
Her golden shuttle, with melodious voice
Sat chanting there; a grove on either side,
Alder and poplar, and the redolent branch
Wide-spread of cypress, skirted dark the cave
Where many a bird of broadest pinion built
Secure her nest, the owl, the kite, and daw,
Long-tongued frequenters of the sandy shores.
A garden vine luxuriant on all sides

Mantled the spacious cavern, cluster-hung
Profuse; four fountains of serenest lymph,
Their sinuous course pursuing side by side,
Strayed all around, and everywhere appeared
Meadows of softest verdure purpled o'er
With violets; it was a scene to fill
A God from heaven with wonder and delight."

There are faults in this, and even blunders, notably in the natural history; and "serenest lymph" is a sad departure from Homeric simplicity. Still, on the whole, the passage in the translation charms, and its charm is tolerably identical with that of the original. In more martial and stirring passages the failure is more signal, and here especially we feel that if Pope's rhyming couplets are sorry equivalents for the Homeric hexameter, blank verse is superior to them only in a negative way. The real equivalent, if any, is the romance metre of Scott, parts of whose poems, notably the last canto of *Marmion* and some passages in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, are about the most Homeric things in our language. Cowper brought such poetic gifts to his work that his failure might have deterred others from making the same hopeless attempt. But a failure his work is; the translation is no more a counterpart of the original, than the Ouse creeping through its meadows is the counterpart of the Ægean rolling before a fresh wind and under a bright sun. Pope delights school-boys; Cowper delights nobody, though, on the rare occasions when he is taken from the shelf, he commends himself, in a certain measure, to the taste and judgment of cultivated men.

In his translations of Horace, both those from the Satires and those from the Odes, Cowper succeeds far better. Horace requires in his translator little of the fire which Cowper lacked. In the Odes he requires grace, in the Satires urbanity and playfulness, all of which Cowper had in abundance. Moreover, Horace is separated from us by no intellectual gulf. He belongs to what Dr. Arnold called the modern period of ancient history. Nor is Cowper's translation of part of the eighth book of Virgil's Æneid bad, in spite of the heaviness of the blank verse. Virgil, like Horace, is within his intellectual range.

As though a translation of the whole of the Homeric poems had not been enough to bury his finer faculty, and prevent him from giving us any more of the minor poems, the publishers seduced him into undertaking an edition of Milton, which was to eclipse all its predecessors in splendour. Perhaps he may have been partly entrapped by a chivalrous desire to rescue his idol from the disparagement cast on it by the tasteless and illiberal Johnson. The project, after weighing on his mind and spirits for some time, was abandoned, leaving as its traces only translations of Milton's Latin poems, and a few notes on *Paradise Lost*, in which there is too much of religion, too little of art.

Lady Hesketh had her eye on the Laureateship, and probably

with that view persuaded her cousin to write loyal verses on the recovery of George III. He wrote the verses, but to the hint of the Laureateship he said, "Heaven guard my brows from the wreath you mention, whatever wreath beside may hereafter adorn them. It would be a leaden extinguisher clapt on my genius, and I should never more produce a line worth reading." Besides, was he not already the mortuary poet of All Saints, Northampton?

CHAPTER VII.

THE LETTERS.

SOUTHEY, no mean judge in such a matter, calls Cowper the best of English letter-writers. If the first place is shared with him by any one it is by Byron, rather than by Gray, whose letters are pieces of fine writing, addressed to literary men, or Horace Walpole, whose letters are memoirs, the English counterpart of St. Simon. The letters both of Gray and Walpole, are manifestly written for publication. Those of Cowper have the true epistolary charm. They are conversation, perfectly artless, and at the same time autobiography, perfectly genuine; whereas all formal autobiography is cooked. They are the vehicles of the writer's thoughts and feelings, and the mirror of his life. We have the strongest proofs that they were not written for publication. In many of them there are outpourings of wretchedness which could not possibly have been intended for any heart but that to which they were addressed, while others contain medical details which no one would have thought of presenting to the public eye. Some, we know, were answers to letters received but a moment before; and Southey says that the manuscripts are very free from erasures. Though Cowper kept a note-book for subjects, which no doubt were scarce with him, it is manifest that he did not premeditate. Grace of form he never lacks, but this was a part of his nature, improved by his classical training. The character and the thoughts presented are those of a recluse who was sometimes a hypochondriac; the life is life at Olney. But simple self-revelation is always interesting, and a garrulous playfulness with great happiness of expression can lend a certain charm even to things most trivial and commonplace. There is also a certain pleasure in being carried back to the quiet days before railways and telegraphs, when people passed their whole lives on the same spot, and life moved always in the same tranquil round. In truth, it is to such days that letter-writing, as a species of literature, belongs; telegrams and postal cards have almost killed it now.

The large collection of Cowper's letters is probably seldom taken from the shelf; and the "Elegant Extracts" select those letters which are most sententious, and therefore least characteristic. Two or three specimens of the other style may not be unwelcome

or needless as elements of a biographical sketch; though specimens hardly do justice to a series of which the charm, such as it is, is evenly diffused, not gathered into centres of brilliancy like Madam de Sévigné's letter on the Orleans Marriage. Here is a letter written in the highest spirits to Lady Hesketh.

"Olney, Feb. 9th, 1786.

"My dearest Cousin,—I have been impatient to tell you that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely occupied by this tormenting specimen, that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday, that would distress and alarm him; I sent him another yesterday, that will, I hope, quiet him again. Johnson has apologised very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures; and his friend has promised to confine himself in future to a comparison of me with the original, so that, I doubt not, we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you once more that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again. I shall hear your voice. We shall take walks together. I will show you my prospects—the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse and its banks, everything that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! Mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visitors but we could easily accommodate them all; though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats; and there you shall sit with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention the country will not be in complete beauty.

"And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. *Imprimis*, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges Puss at present; but he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author; it was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table, which I also made; but a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament; and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the further end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlour, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and

where we will be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my cousin, to the Swan at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

"My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him whether he is sure that it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be anything better than a cask to eternity. So, if the god is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

"Adieu! my dearest, dearest cousin. W. C."

Here, by way of contrast, is a letter written in the lowest spirits possible to Mr. Newton. It displays literary grace inalienable even in the depths of hypochondria. It also shows plainly the connexion of hypochondria with the weather. January was a month to the return of which the sufferer always looked forward with dread as a mysterious season of evil. It was a season, especially at Olney, of thick fog combined with bitter frosts. To Cowper this state of the atmosphere appeared the emblem of his mental state; we see in it the cause. At the close the letter slides from spiritual despair to the worsted-merchant, showing that, as we remarked before, the language of despondency had become habitual, and does not always flow from a soul really in the depths of woe.

To the Rev. John Newton.

"Jan. 13th, 1784.

"My dear Friend,—I too have taken leave of the old year, and parted with it just when you did, but with very different sentiments and feelings upon the occasion. I looked back upon all the passages and occurrences of it, as a traveller looks back upon a wilderness through which he has passed with weariness and sorrow of heart, reaping no other fruit of his labour than the poor consolation that, dreary as the desert was, he has left it all behind him. The traveller would find even this comfort considerably lessened if, as soon as he had passed one wilderness, another of equal length, and equally desolate, should expect him. In this particular, his experience and mine would exactly tally. I should rejoice, indeed, that the old year is over and gone, if I had not every reason to prophesy a new one similar to it.

"The new year is already old in my account. I am not, indeed, sufficiently second-sighted to be able to boast by anticipation an acquaintance with the events of it yet unborn, but rest convinced that, be they what they may, not one of them comes a messenger of good to me. If even death itself should be of the number, he is no friend of mine. It is an alleviation of the woes even of an unenlightened man, that he can wish for death, and indulge a hope, at least, that in death he shall find deliverance. But, loaded as my life is with despair, I have no such comfort as would result from a supposed probability of better things to come, were it once

ended. For, more unhappy than the traveller with whom I set out, pass through what difficulties I may, through whatever dangers and afflictions, I am not a whit nearer the home, unless a dungeon may be called so. This is no very agreeable theme; but in so great a dearth of subjects to write upon, and especially impressed as I am at this moment with a sense of my own condition, I could choose no other. The weather is an exact emblem of my mind in its present state. A thick fog envelopes everything, and at the same time it freezes intensely. You will tell me that this cold gloom will be succeeded by a cheerful spring, and endeavour to encourage me to hope for a spiritual change resembling it;—but it will be lost labour. Nature revives again; but a soul once slain lives no more. The hedge that has been apparently dead, is not so; it will burst into leaf and blossom at the appointed time; but no such time is appointed for the stake that stands in it. It is as dead as it seems, and will prove itself no dissembler. The latter end of next month will complete a period of eleven years in which I have spoken no other language. It is a long time for a man, whose eyes were once opened, to spend in darkness; long enough to make despair an inveterate habit; and such it is in me. My friends, I know, expect that I shall see yet again. They think it necessary to the existence of divine truth, that he who once had possession of it should never finally lose it. I admit the solidity of this reasoning in every case but my own. And why not in my own? For causes which to them it appears madness to allege, but which rest upon my mind with a weight of immovable conviction. If I am recoverable, why am I thus?—why crippled and made useless in the Church, just at that time of life when, my judgment and experience being matured, I might be most useful?—why cashiered and turned out of service, till, according to the course of nature, there is not life enough left in me to make amends for the years I have lost—till there is no reasonable hope left that the fruit can ever pay the expense of the fallow? I forestall the answer:—God's ways are mysterious, and He giveth no account of His matters—an answer that would serve my purpose as well as theirs to use it. There is a mystery in my destruction, and in time it shall be explained.

"I am glad you have found so much hidden treasure; and Mrs. Unwin desires me to tell you that you did her no more than justice in believing that she would rejoice in it. It is not easy to surmise the reason why the reverend doctor, your predecessor, concealed it. Being a subject of a free government, and I suppose full of the divinity most in fashion, he could not fear lest his riches should expose him to persecution. Nor can I suppose that he held it any disgrace for a dignitary of the Church to be wealthy, at a time when Churchmen in general spare no pains to become so. But the wisdom of some men has a droll sort of knavishness in it, much like that of a magpie, who hides what he finds with a deal of contrivance, merely for the pleasure of doing it.

"Mrs. Unwin is tolerably well. She wishes me to add that she shall be obliged to Mrs. Newton, if, when an opportunity offers,

she will give the worsted-merchant a jog. We congratulate you that Eliza does not grow worse, which I know you expected would be the case in the course of the winter. Present our love to her. Remember us to Sally Johnson, and assure yourself that we remain as warmly as ever, Yours, W. C.

"M. U."

In the next specimen we shall see the faculty of imparting interest to the most trivial incident by the way of telling it. The incident in this case is one which also forms the subject of the little poem called *The Colubriad.*

To the Rev. William Unwin.

"Aug. 3rd, 1782.

"My dear Friend,—Entertaining some hope that Mr. Newton's next letter would furnish me with the means of satisfying your inquiry on the subject of Dr. Johnson's opinion, I have till now delayed my answer to your last; but the information is not yet come, Mr. Newton having intermitted a week more than usual since his last writing. When I receive it, favourable or not, it shall be communicated to you; but I am not very sanguine in my expectations from that quarter. Very learned and very critical heads are hard to please. He may, perhaps, treat me with levity for the sake of my subject and design, but the composition, I think, will hardly escape his censure. Though all doctors may not be of the same mind, there is one doctor at least, whom I have lately discovered, my professed admirer. He too, like Johnson, was with difficulty persuaded to read, having an aversion to all poetry except the *Night Thoughts;* which, on a certain occasion, when being confined on board a ship, he had no other employment, he got by heart. He was, however, prevailed upon, and read me several times over; so that if my volume had sailed with him, instead of Dr. Young's, I might, perhaps, have occupied that shelf in his memory which he then allotted to the Doctor: his name is Renny, and he lives at Newport Pagnel.

"It is a sort of paradox, but it is true: we are never more in danger than when we think ourselves most secure, nor in reality more secure than when we seem to be most in danger. Both sides of this apparent contradiction were lately verified in my experience. Passing from the greenhouse to the barn, I saw three kittens (for we have so many in our retinue) looking with fixed attention at something, which lay on the threshold of a door, coiled up. I took but little notice of them at first; but a loud hiss engaged me to attend more closely, when behold—a viper! the largest I remember to have seen, rearing itself, darting its forked tongue, and ejaculating the aforementioned hiss at the nose of a kitten, almost in contact with his lips. I ran into the hall for a hoe with a long handle, with which I intended to assail him, and returning in a few

seconds missed him: he was gone, and I feared had escaped me Still, however, the kitten sat watching immovably upon the same spot. I concluded, therefore, that, sliding between the door and the threshold, he had found his way out of the garden into the yard. I went round immediately, and there found him in close conversation with the old cat, whose curiosity being excited by so novel an appearance, inclined her to pat his head repeatedly with her fore foot; with her claws, however, sheathed, and not in anger, but in the way of philosophical inquiry and examination. To prevent her falling a victim to so laudable an exercise of her talents, I interposed in a moment with the hoe, and performed an act of decapitation, which, though not immediately mortal, proved so in the end. Had he slid into the passages, where it is dark, or had he, when in the yard, met with no interruption from the cat, and secreted himself in any of the outhouses, it is hardly possible but that some of the family must have been bitten; he might have been trodden upon without being perceived, and have slipped away before the sufferer could have well distinguished what foe had wounded him. Three years ago we discovered one in the same place, which the barber slew with a trowel.

"Our proposed removal to Mr. Small's was, as you suppose, a jest, or rather a joco-serious matter. We never looked upon it as entirely feasible, yet we saw in it something so like practicability, that we did not esteem it altogether unworthy of our attention. It was one of those projects which people of lively imaginations play with, and admire for a few days, and then break in pieces. Lady Austen returned on Thursday from London, where she spent the last fortnight, and whither she was called by an unexpected opportunity to dispose of the remainder of her lease. She has now, therefore, no longer any connexion with the great city; she has none on earth whom she calls friends but us, and no house but at Olney. Her abode is to be at the Vicarage, where she has hired as much room as she wants, which she will embellish with her own furniture, and which she will occupy, as soon as the minister's wife has produced another child, which is expected to make its entry in October.

"Mr. Bull, a dissenting minister of Newport, a learned, ingenious, good-natured, pious friend of ours, who sometimes visits us, and whom we visited last week, has put into my hands three volumes of French poetry, composed by Madame Guyon;—a quietist, say you, and a fanatic; I will have nothing to do with her. It is very well, you are welcome to have nothing to do with her, but in the meantime her verse is the only French verse I ever read that I found agreeable; there is a neatness in it equal to that which we applaud with so much reason in the compositions of Prior. I have translated several of them, and shall proceed in my translations till I have filled a Lilliputian paper-book I happen to have by me, which, when filled, I shall present to Mr. Bull. He is her passionate admirer, rode twenty miles to see her picture in the house of a stranger, which stranger politely insisted on his acceptance of it,

and it now hangs over his parlour chimney. It is a striking portrait, too characteristic not to be a strong resemblance, and were it encompassed with a glory, instead of being dressed in a nun's hood, might pass for the face of an angel.

"Our meadows are covered with a winter-flood in August; the rushes with which our bottomless chairs were to have been bottomed, and much hay, which was not carried, are gone down the river on a voyage to Ely, and it is even uncertain whether they will ever return. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

"I am glad you have found a curate; may he answer! Am happy in Mrs. Bouverie's continued approbation; it is worth while to write for such a reader. Yours, W. C."

The power of imparting interest to commonplace incidents is so great that we read with a sort of excitement a minute account of the conversion of an old card-table into a writing and dining table, with the causes and consequences of that momentous event; curiosity having been first cunningly aroused by the suggestion that the clerical friend to whom the letter is addressed might, if the mystery were not explained, be haunted by it when he was getting into his pulpit, at which time, as he had told Cowper, perplexing questions were apt to come into his mind.

A man who lived by himself could have little but himself to write about. Yet in these letters there is hardly a touch of offensive egotism. Nor is there any querulousness, except that of religious despondency. From those weaknesses Cowper was free. Of his proneness to self-revelation we have had a specimen already.

The minor antiquities of the generations immediately preceding ours are becoming rare, as compared with those of remote ages, because nobody thinks it worth while to preserve them. It is almost as easy to get a personal memento of Priam or Nimrod as it is to get a harpsichord, a spinning-wheel, a tinder-box, or a scratch-back. An Egyptian wig is attainable, a wig of the Georgian era is hardly so, mnch less a tie of the Regency. So it is with the scenes of common life a century or two ago. They are being lost, because they were familiar. Here are two of them, however, which have limned themselves with the distinctness of the camera-obscura on the page of a chronicler of trifles.

To the Rev. John Newton.

Nov. 17th, 1783.

"My dear Friend.—The country around is much alarmed with apprehensions of fire. Two have happened since that of Olney. One at Hitchin, where the damage is said to amount to eleven thousand pounds; and another, at a place not far from Hitchin, of which I have not yet learnt the name. Letters have been dropped at Bedford, threatening to burn the town; and the inhabitants have been so intimidated as to have place a guard in many parts of it, several nights past. Since our conflagration here, we

have sent two woman and a boy to the justice for depredation; S.R. for stealing a piece of beef, which, in her excuse, she said she intended to take care of. This lady, whom you well remember, escaped for want of evidence; not that evidence was wanting, but our men of Gotham judged it unnecessary to send it. With her went the woman I mentioned before, who, it seems, has made some sort of profession, but upon this occasion allowed herself a latitude of conduct rather inconsistent with it, having filled her apron with wearing-apparel, which she likewise intended to take care of. She would have gone to the county gaol, had William Raban, the baker's son, who prosecuted, insisted upon it; but he, good-naturedly, though I think weakly, interposed in her favour, and begged her off. The young gentleman who accompanied these fair ones is the junior son of Molly Boswell. He had stolen some iron-work, the property of Griggs the butcher. Being convicted, he was ordered to be whipped, which operation he underwent at the cart's tail, from the stone-house to the high arch, and back again. He seemed to show great fortitude, but it was all an imposition upon the public. The beadle, who performed it, had filled his left hand with yellow ochre, through which, after every stroke. he drew the lash of his whip, leaving the appearance of a wound upon the skin, but in reality not hurting him at all. This being perceived by Mr. Constable H., who followed the beadle, he applied his cane, without any such management or precaution, to the shoulders of the too merciful executioner. The scene immediately became more interesting. The beadle could by no means be prevailed upon to strike hard, which provoked the constable to strike harder; and this double flogging continued, till a lass of Silver-End, pitying the pitiful beadle thus suffering under the hands of the pitiless constable, joined the procession, and placing herself immediately behind the latter, seized him by his capillary club, and pulling him backwards by the same, slapped his face with a most Amazon fury. This concatenation of events has taken up more of my paper than I intended it should, but I could not forbear to inform you how the beadle thrashed the thief, the constable the beadle, and the lady the constable, and how the thief was the only person concerned who suffered nothing. Mr. Teedon has been here, and is gone again. He came to thank me for some left-off clothes. In answer to our inquiries after his health, he replied that he had a slow fever, which made him take all possible care not to inflame his blood. I admitted his prudence, but in his particular instance could not very clearly discern the need of it. Pump water will not heat him much; and, to speak a little in his own style, more inebriating fluids are to him, I fancy, not very attainable. He brought us news, the truth of which, however, I do not vouch for, that the town of Bedford was actually on fire yesterday, and the flames not extinguished when the bearer of the tidings left it.

"Swift observes, when he is giving his reasons why the preacher is elevated always above his hearers, that, let the crowd be as

great as it will below there is always room enough overhead. If the French philosophers can carry their art of flying to the perfection they desire, the observation may be reversed, the crowd will be overhead, and they will have most room who stay below. I can assure you, however, upon my own experience, that this way of travelling is very delightful. I dreamt a night or two since that I drove myself through the upper regions in a balloon and pair, with the greatest ease and security. Having finished the tour I intended, I made a short turn, and with one flourish of my whip, descended; my horses prancing and curvetting with an infinite share of spirit, but without the least danger, either to me or my vehicle. The time, we may suppose, is at hand, and seems to be prognosticated by my dream, when these airy excursions will be universal, when judges will fly the circuit, and bishops their visitations; and when the tour of Europe will be performed with much greater speed, and with equal advantage, by all who travel merely for the sake of having it to say that they have made.

"I beg you will accept for yourself and yours our unfeigned love, and remember me affectionately to Mr. Bacon, when you see him. Yours, my dear friend,

"WM. COWPER."

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

"March 29th, 1784.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—It being his Majesty's pleasure that I should yet have another opportunity to write before he dissolves the Parliament, I avail myself of it with all possible alacrity. I thank you for your last, which was not the less welcome for coming, like an extraordinary gazette, at a time when it was not expected.

"As when the sea is uncommonly agitated, the water finds its way into creeks and holes of rocks, which in its calmer state it never reaches, in like manner the effect of these turbulent times is felt even at Orchard Side, where, in general, we live as undisturbed by the political element as shrimps or cockles that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the water-mark, by the usual dashing of the waves. We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding worsted, when to our unspeakable surprise a mob appeared before the window; a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys bellowed, and the maid announced Mr. Grenville. Puss was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entry, and referred to the back door, as the only possible way of approach.

"Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at the window than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour were filled. Mr. Grenville, advancing toward me, shook me by the hand

with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he, and as many more as could find chairs, were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe, and the less, no doubt, because Mr. Ashburner, the draper, addressing himself to me at this moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion by saying, that if I had any I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr. Grenville squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and withdrew. He kissed, likewise, the maid in the kitchen, and seemed, upon the whole, a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman. He is very young, genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he suspended from his buttonhole. The boys halloo'd; the dogs barked; puss scampered; the hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquility, never probably to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself, however, happy in being able to affirm truly that I had not that influence for which he sued; and which, had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in a world where one cannot exercise any without disobliging somebody. The town, however, seems to be much at his service, and if he be equally successful throughout the country, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr. Ashburner, perhaps, was a little mortified, because it was evident that I owed the honour of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr. Grenville that I had three heads, I should not, I suppose, have been bound to produce them.

"Mr. Scott, who you say was so much admired in your pulpit, would be equally admired in his own, at least by all capable judges, were he not so apt to be angry with his congregation. This hurt him, and had he the understanding and eloquence of Paul himself, would still hurt him. He seldom, hardly ever indeed, preaches a gentle, well-tempered sermon, but I hear it highly commended; but warmth of temper, indulged to a degree that may be called scolding, defeats the end of preaching. It is a misapplication of his powers, which it also cripples, and tears away his hearers. But he is a good man, and may perhaps outgrow it.

"Many thanks for the worsted, which is excellent. We are as well as a spring hardly less severe than the severest winter will give us leave to be. With our united love, we conclude ourselves yours and Mrs. Newton's affectionate and faithful, W. C.

M. U."

In 1789 the French Revolution, advancing with thunder-tread, makes even the hermit of Weston look up for a moment from his translation of Homer, though he little dreamed that he, with his gentle philanthropy and sentimentalism, had anything to do with the great overturn of the social and political systems of the past. From time to time some crash of especial magnitude awakens a faint echo in the letters.

To Lady Hesketh.

"July 7th, 1790.

"Instead of beginning with the saffron-vested mourning to which Homer invites me, on a morning that has no saffron vest to boast, I shall begin with you. It is irksome to us both to wait so long as we must for you, but we are willing to hope that by a longer stay you will make us amends for all this tedious procrastination.

"Mrs. Unwin has made known her whole case to Mr. Gregson, whose opinion of it has been very consolatory to me; he says, indeed, it is a case perfectly out of the reach of all physical aid, but at the same time not at all dangerous. Constant pain is a sad grievance, whatever part is affected, and she is hardly ever free from an aching head, as well as an uneasy side; but patience is an anodyne of God's own preparation, and of that he gives her largely.

"The French who, like all lively folks, are extreme in everything, are such in their zeal for freedom; and if it were possible to make so noble a cause ridiculous, their manner of promoting it could not fail to do so. Princes and peers reduced to plain gentlemanship, and gentles reduced to a level with their own lackeys, are excesses of which they will repent hereafter. Differences of rank and subordination are, I believe, of God's appointment, and consequently essential to the well-being of society; but what we mean by fanaticism in religion is exactly that which animates their politics; and, unless time should sober them, they will, after all, be an unhappy people. Perhaps it deserves not much to be wondered at, that at their first escape from tyrannic shackles they should act extravagantly, and treat their kings as they have sometimes treated their idol. To these, however, they are reconciled in due time again, but their respect for monarchy is at an end. They want nothing now but a little English sobriety, and that they want extremely. I heartily wish them some wit in their anger, for it were great pity that so many millions should be miserable for want of it."

This, it will be admitted, is very moderate and unapocalyptic. Presently Monarchical Europe takes arms against the Revolution. But there are two political observers at least who see that Monarchical Europe is making a mistake—Kaunitz and Cowper. "The French," observes Cowper to Lady Hesketh in December, 1792, "are a vain and childish people, and conduct themselves on this grand occasion with a levity and extravagance nearly akin to mad-

ness; but it would have been better for Austria and Prussia to let them alone. All nations have a right to choose their own form of government, and the sovereignty of the people is a doctrine that evinces itself; for, whenever the people choose to be masters, they always are so, and none can hinder them. God grant that we may have no revolution here, but unless we have reform, we certainly shall. Depend upon it, my dear, the hour has come when power founded on patronage and corrupt majorities must govern this land no longer. Concessions, too, must be made to Dissenters of every denomination. They have a right to them—a right to all the privileges of Englishmen, and sooner or later, by fair means or by foul, they will have them." Even in 1793, though he expresses, as he well might, a cordial abhorrence of the doings of the French, he calls them not fiends, but "madcaps." He expresses the strongest indignation against the Tory mob which sacked Priestley's house at Birmingham, as he does, in justice be it said, against all manifestations of fanaticism. We cannot help sometimes wishing, as we read these passages in the letters, that their calmness and reasonableness could have been communicated to another "Old Whig," who was setting the world on fire with his anti-revolutionary rhetoric.

It is true, as has already been said, that Cowper was "extramundane;" and that his political reasonableness was in part the result of the fancy that he and his fellow-saints had nothing to do with the world but to keep themselves clear of it, and let it go its own way to destruction. But it must also be admitted that while the wealth of Establishments of which Burke was the ardent defender, is necessarily reactionary in the highest degree, the tendency of religion itself, wbere it is genuine and sincere, must be to repress any selfish feeling about class or position, and to make men, in temporal matters, more willing to sacrifice the present to the future, especially where the hope is held out of moral as well as of material improvement. Thus it has come to pass that men who professed and imagined themselves to have no interest in this world have practically been its great reformers and improvers in the political and material as well as in the moral sphere.

The last specimen shall be one in the more sententious style, and one which proves that Cowper was capable of writing in a judicious manner on a difficult and delicate question—even a question so difficult and so delicate as that of the propriety of painting the face.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

"May 3d, 1784.

"My Dear Friend,—The subject of face painting may be considered, I think, in two points of view. First, there is room for dispute with respect to the consistency of the practice with good morals; and, secondly, whether it be, on the whole, convenient or not, may be a matter worthy of agitation. I set out with all the formality of logical disquisition, but do not promise to observe the

same regularity any further than it may comport with my purpose of writing as fast as I can.

"As to the immorality of the custom, were I in France, I should see none. On the contrary, in seems in that country to be a symptom of modest consciousness, and a tacit confession of what all know to be true, that French faces have, in fact, neither red nor white of their own. This humble acknowledgment of a defect looks the more like a virtue, being found among a people not remarkable for humility. Again, before we can prove the practice to be immoral, we must prove immorality in the design of those who use it; either that they intend a deception, or to kindle unlawful desires in the beholders. But the French ladies, so far as their purpose comes in question, must be acquitted of both these charges. Nobody supposes their colour to be natural for a moment, any more than he would if it were blue or green; and this unambiguous judgment of the matter is owing to two causes: first, to the universal knowledge we have, that French women are naturally either brown or yellow, with very few exceptions; and secondly, to the inartificial manner in which they paint; for they do not, as I am most satisfactorily informed, even attempt an imitation of nature, but besmear themselves hastily, and at a venture, anxious only to lay on enough. Where, therefore, there is no wanton intention, nor a wish to deceive, I can discover no immorality. But in England. I am afraid our painted ladies are not clearly entitled to the same apology. They even imitate nature with such exactness that the whole public is sometimes divided into parties, who litigate with great warmth the question whether painted or not? This was remarkably the case with a Miss B——, whom I well remember. Her roses and lilies were never discovered to be spurious till she attained an age that made the supposition of their being natural impossible. This anxiety to be not merely red and white, which is all they aim at in France. but to be thought very beautiful, and much more beautiful than Nature has made them, is a symptom not very favourable to the idea we would wish to entertain of the chastity, purity, and modesty of our countrywomen. That they are guilty of a design to deceive, is certain. Otherwise why so much art? and if to deceive, wherefore and with what purpose? Certainly either to gratify vanity of the silliest kind, or, which is still more criminal, to decoy and enveigle, and carry on more successfully the business of temptation. Here, therefore, my opinion splits itself into two opposite sides upon the same question. I can suppose a French woman, though painted an inch deep, to be a virtuous, discreet, excellent character; and in no instance should I think the worse of one because she was painted. But an English belle must pardon me if I have not the same charity for her. She is at least an impostor, whether she cheats me or not, because she means to do so; and it is well if that be all the censure that she deserves.

"This brings me to my second class of ideas upon this topic; and here I feel that I should be fearfully puzzled were I called

upon to recommend the practice on the score of convenience. If a husband chose that his wife should paint, perhaps it might be her duty, as well as her interest, to comply. But I think he would not much consult his own, for reasons that will follow. In the first place, she would admire herself the more; and in the next, if she managed the matter well, she might be more admired by others; an acquisition that might bring her virtue under trials, to which otherwise it might never have been exposed. In no other case, however can I imagine the practice in this country to be either expedient or convenient. As a general one it certainly is not expedient, because, in general, English women have no occasion for it. A swarthy complexion is a rarity here; and the sex, especially since inoculation has been so much in use, have very little cause to complain that nature has not been kind to them in the article of complexion. They may hide and spoil a good one, but they cannot, at least they hardly can, give themselves a better. But even if they could, there is yet a tragedy in the sequel which should make them tremble.

"I understand that in France, though the use of rouge be general, the use of white paint is far from being so. In England, she that uses one commonly uses both. Now, all white paints, or lotions, or whatever they may be called, are mercurial; consequently poisonous, consequently ruinous, in time, to the constitution. The Miss B—— above mentioned was a miserable witness of this truth it being certain that her flesh fell from her bones before she died. Lady Coventry was hardly a less melancholy proof of it; and a London physician, perhaps. were he at liberty to blab, could publish a bill of female mortality, of a length that would astonish us.

"For these reasons I utterly condemn the practice, as it obtains in England; and for a reason superior to all these, I must disapprove of it. I cannot, indeed, discover that Scripture forbids it in so many words. But that anxious solicitude about the person, which such an artifice evidently betrays, is, I am sure, contrary to the tenor and spirit of it throughout. Show me a woman with a painted face, and I will show you a woman whose heart is set on things of the earth, and not on things above.

"But this observation of mine applies to it only when it is an imitative art. For, in the use of French women, I think it is as innocent as in the use of a wild Indian, who draws a circle round her face, and makes two spots, perhaps blue, perhaps white, in the middle of it. Such are my thoughts upon the matter.

"*Vive valeque.*

"Yours ever,

"W. C."

These letters have been chosen as illustrations of Cowper's epistolary style, and for that purpose they have been given entire. But they are also the best pictures of his character; and his character is everything. The events of his life worthy of record might all be comprised in a dozen pages.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLOSE OF LIFE.

COWPER says there could not have been a happier trio on earth than Lady Hesketh, Mrs. Unwin, and himself. Nevertheless, after his removal to Weston, he again went mad, and once more attempted self-destruction. His malady was constitutional, and it settled down upon him as his years increased, and his strength failed. He was now sixty. The Olney physicians, instead of husbanding his vital power, had wasted it away *secundum artem* by purging, bleeding, and emetics. He had overworked himself on his fatal translation of Homer, under the burden of which he moved, as he says himself, like an ass overladen with sand-bags. He had been getting up to work at six, and not breakfasting till eleven. And now the life from which his had for so many years been fed, itself began to fail. Mrs. Unwin was stricken with paralysis; the stroke was slight, but of its nature there was no doubt. Her days of bodily life were numbered: of mental life there remained to her a still shorter span. Her excellent son, William Unwin, had died of a fever soon after the removal of the pair to Weston. He had been engaged in the work of his profession as a clergyman, and we do not hear of his being often at Olney. But he was in constant correspondence with Cowper, in whose heart as well as in that of Mrs. Unwin, his death must have left a great void, and his support was withdrawn just at the moment when it was about to become most necessary.

Happily, just at this juncture a new and a good friend appeared. Hayley was a mediocre poet, who had for a time obtained distinction above his merits. Afterwards his star had declined, but having an excellent heart, he had not been in the least soured by the downfall of his reputation. He was addicted to a pompous rotundity of style; perhaps he was rather absurd; but he was thoroughly good-natured, very anxious to make himself useful, and devoted to Cowper, to whom, as a poet, he looked up with an admiration unalloyed by any other feeling. Both of them, as it happened, were engaged on Milton, and an attempt had been made to set them by the ears; but Hayley took advantage of it to introduce himself to Cowper with an effusion of the warmest esteem. He was at Weston when Mrs. Unwin was attacked with paralysis, and displayed his resource by trying to cure her with an electric-

machine. At Eartham, on the coast of Sussex, he had, by an expenditure beyond his means, made for himself a little paradise, where it was his delight to gather a distinguished circle. To this place he gave the pair a pressing invitation, which was accepted in the vain hope that a change might do Mrs. Unwin good.

From Weston to Eartham was a three days' journey, an enterprise not undertaken without much trepidation and earnest prayer. It was safely accomplished, however, the enthusiastic Mr. Rose walking to meet his poet and philosopher on the way. Hayley had tried to get Thurlow to meet Cowper. A sojourn in a country house with the tremendous Thurlow, the only talker for whom Johnson condescended to prepare himself, would have been rather an overpowering pleasure; and perhaps, after all, it was as well that Hayley could only get Cowper's disciple, Hurdis, afterwards professor of poetry at Oxford, and Charlotte Smith.

At Eartham, Cowper's portrait was painted by Romney.

"Romney, expert infallibly to trace
On chart or canvas not the form alone
And semblance, but, however faintly shown
The mind's impression too on every face,
With strokes that time ought never to erase,
Thou hast so pencilled mine that though I own
The subject worthless, I have never known
The artist shining with superior grace;
But this I mark, that symptoms none of woe
In thy incomparable work appear:
Well: I am satisfied it should be so,
Since on maturer thought the cause is clear;
For in my looks what sorrow could'st thou see
When I was Hayley's guest and sat to thee."

Southey observes that it was likely enough there would be no melancholy in the portrait, but that Hayley and Romney fell into a singular error in mistaking for "the light of genius" what Leigh Hunt calls "a fire fiercer than that either of intellect or fancy, gleaming from the raised and protruded eye."

Hayley evidently did his utmost to make his guest happy. They spent the hours in literary chat, and compared notes about Milton. The first days were days of enjoyment. But soon the recluse began to long for his nook at Weston. Even the extensiveness of the view at Eartham made his mind ache, and increased his melancholy. To Weston the pair returned; the paralytic, of course, none the better for her journey. Her mind as well as her body was now rapidly giving way. We quote as biography that which is too well known to be quoted as poetry.

TO MARY.

The twentieth year is well-nigh past
Since first our sky was overcast:—
Ah, would that this might be the last!
My Mary!

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
I see thee daily weaker grow :—
'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary!

Thy needles, once a shining store,
For my sake restless heretofore,
Now rust disused, and shine no more,
My Mary!

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,
My Mary!

But well thou play'dst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads with magic art,
Have wound themselves about this heart,
My Mary!

Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language utter'd in a dream :
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary!

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary!

For could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see?
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary!

Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign;
Yet gently press'd, press gently mine,
My Mary!

Such feebleness of limbs thou provest,
That now at every step thou movest,
Upheld by two; yet still thou lovest,
My Mary!

And still to love, though press'd with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary!

But ah! by constant heed I know,
How oft the sadness that I show
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,
My Mary!

And should my future lot be cast
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,
My Mary!

Even love, at least the power of manifesting love, began to betray its mortality. She who had been so devoted, became, as her mind failed, exacting, and instead of supporting her partner, drew him down. He sank again into the depth of hypochondria. As usual, his malady took the form of religious horrors, and he fancied that he was ordained to undergo severe penance for his sins. Six days he sat motionless and silent, almost refusing to take food. His physician suggested, as the only chance of arousing him, that Mrs. Unwin should be induced, if possible, to invite him to go out with her; with difficulty she was made to understand what they wanted her to do; at last she said that it was a fine morning, and she should like a walk. Her partner at once rose and placed her arm in his. Almost unconsciously, she had rescued him from the evil spirit for the last time. The pair were in doleful plight. When their minds failed they had fallen in a miserable manner under the influence of a man named Teedon, a schoolmaster crazed with self-conceit, at whom Cowper in his saner mood had laughed, but whom he now treated as a spiritual oracle, and a sort of medium of communication with the spirit-world, writing down the nonsense which the charlatan talked. Mrs. Unwin, being no longer in a condition to control the expenditure, the housekeeping, of course, went wrong; and at the same time her partner lost the protection of the love-inspired tact by which she had always contrived to shield his weakness and to secure for him, in spite of his eccentricities, respectful treatment from his neighbours. Lady Hesketh's health had failed, and she had been obliged to go to Bath. Hayley now proved himself no mere lion-hunter, but a true friend. In conjunction with Cowper's relatives, he managed the removal of the pair from Weston to Mundsley, on the coast of Norfolk, where Cowper seemed to be soothed by the sound of the sea; then to Dunham Lodge, near Swaffham; and finally (in 1796) to East Dereham, where, two months after their arrival, Mrs. Unwin died. Her partner was barely conscious of his loss. On the morning of her death he asked the servant "whether there was life above stairs?" On being taken to see the corpse, he gazed at it for a moment, uttered one passionate cry of grief, and never spoke of Mrs. Unwin more. He had the misfortune to survive her three years and a half, during which relatives and friends were kind, and Miss Perowne partly filled the place of Mrs. Unwin. Now and then there was a gleam of reason and faint revival of literary faculty; but composition was confined to Latin verse or translation, with one memorable and almost awful exception. The last original poem written by Cowper was *The Castaway*, founded on an incident in Anson's Voyage.

"Obscurest night involved the sky,
The Atlantic billows roared,
When such a destined wretch as I,
Wash'd headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home forever left

"No braver chief could Albion boast
Than he with whom he went,
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast
With warmer wishes sent.
He loved them both, but both in vain;
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

"Not long beneath the whelming brine,
Expert to swim, he lay;
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
Or courage die away;
But waged with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

"He shouted; nor his friends had fail'd
To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevail'
That pitiless perforce
They left their outcast mate behi
And scudded still before the wind.

"Some succour yet they could afford;
And, such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
Delay'd not to bestow:
But he, they knew, nor ship nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

"Nor, cruel as it seem'd, could he
Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight in such a sea
Alone could rescue them;
Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

"He long survives, who lives an hour
In ocean, self-upheld;
And so long he, with unspent power
His destiny repelled:
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried—'Adieu!''

"At length, his transient respite past,
His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in every blast,
Could catch the sound no more:
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

"No poet wept him; but the page
Of narrative sincere,
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
Is wet with Anson's tear:
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalise the dead.

"I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date:
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

"No voice divine the storm allay'd,
No light propitious shone,
When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,
We perish'd, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelm'd in deeper gulfs than he."

The despair which finds vent in verse is hardly despair. Poetry can never be the direct expression of emotion; it must be the product of reflection combined with an exercise of the faculty of composition which in itself is pleasant. Still, *The Castaway* ought to be an antidote to religious depression, since it is the work of a man of whom it would be absurdity to think as really estranged from the spirit of good, who had himself done good to the utmost of his powers.

Cowper died very peacefully on the morning of April 25, 1800, and was buried in Dereham Church, where there is a monument to him with an inscription by Hayley, which, if it is not good poetry, is a tribute of sincere affection.

Any one whose lot it is to write upon the life and works of Cowper must feel that there is an immense difference between the interest which attaches to him, and that which attaches to any one among the far greater poets of the succeeding age. Still there is something about him so attractive, his voice has such a silver tone, he retains, even in his ashes, such a faculty of winning friends, that his biographer and critic may be easily beguiled into giving him too high a place. He belongs to a particular religious movement, with the vitality of which the interest of a great part of his works has departed or is departing. Still more emphatically and in a still more important sense does he belong to Christianity. In no natural struggle for existence would he have been the survivor; by no natural process of selection would he ever have been picked out as a vessel of honour. If the shield which for eighteen centuries Christ, by His teaching and His death, has spread over the weak things of this world, should fail, and might should again become the title to existence and the measure of worth, Cowper will be cast aside as a specimen of despicable infirmity, and all who have said anything in his praise will be treated with the same scorn.

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